

Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force

Report to General Conference 2024

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Executive Summary

This report is a response to the Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCiC) and the mandate given to the Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force (RJEETF) to offer recommendations to address racism in all its forms. The intent is to empower our leaders by suggesting a justice and equity strategy—to the end that our movement would embody ethnic diversity, conciliation, and deep intercultural relationships as necessary markers of Biblical shalom. We believe that this report is part of our responsibility and our beliefs in the “Frees” that make us uniquely Free Methodist. We offer this report in that spirit.

The report was completed over the course of three and a half years, gathering research comprised of different methodologies: theological, historical, phenomenological, and statistical, among others. As such, this report is sectioned as following: history—tracing the story of FMCiC engagement with indigenous peoples in Canada as well as the story of a local congregation; congregational experience—illuminating the on-the-ground stories of encounters of racism, interculturalism, and biblical shalom; the story of FMCiC leadership—revealing the difficulties of putting theological values into praxis; highlighting Québec and the Québécois story.

From the research, we propose the following recommendations, summarized here:

1. Gather and record demographic data that includes race and ethnicity.
2. Create and provide educational resources that offer an understanding of diversity as God-designed.
3. Diversify environments for interactions, training, internships, and/or placements.
4. Commit to identifying and minimizing barriers to accessing scholarships and financial aid in order to intentionally develop leaders from all people groups.
5. Develop an arm’s length Human Resources (HR) system where racial and ethnic discrimination and other issues can be addressed by an unbiased party.
6. Establish a recruiting system for the Nominating Committee that is policy driven and equity based.
7. Conduct further research into the immigrant experience as it pertains to faith, church leadership, the passing on of faith through generations, and the role of immigrants in the future of the Canadian church.
8. Curate a list of resources that examines the concept of the *imago Dei* from an RJEE lens (SCOD specific).
9. Institute equitable and sustainable practice for English and French translation.

Our prayer is that this report and these recommendations will continue the conversation within the FMCiC, so that we might be more “free” to follow Jesus together—from Jerusalem, to Samaria, and beyond.

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Introduction

In 2020, as the world found itself confronted with COVID-19 and the looming uncertainty that came with the news of the pandemic, the world also found itself face to face with the disturbing reality of racially motivated violence. On May 25, 2020, Mr. George Floyd was murdered at the hands of the police. His killing was recorded and his plea for his mother and cries, “I can’t breathe” shook individuals, nations, and organizations around the world.

In response, protests emerged, articles were written, and statements of outrage were proclaimed as communities of black and brown persons mourned. They mourned for the loss that the Floyd family suffered, but also grieved the losses that racial discrimination had cost them, their families, friends, and neighbours. This moment was coupled with announcements and media broadcasts regarding the death of other black men and women, the rise of hate and discrimination towards individuals of Asian heritage, stories of unmarked graves on the grounds of former Indian Residential Schools and continued discrimination of Indigenous people in Canada and beyond.

While people of colour (POC) were mourning, for some it felt as though the church was silent and even unwilling to take a clear and direct stand for anti-racist learning, postures, and policies. Rather than standing with those who were mourning, those from the majority culture seemed quick to ask those who longed for a more equitable world to wait just a little bit longer, seek individual heart change and not get caught up in “identity politics”. This, however, was not an acceptable response for those whose experience both within and outside of the church had been marred deeply by racism. The “wait and pray”, the “wait and see”, and the “wait for justice to trickle down” approaches were allowing harm to continue to those scarred by racism, bias and microaggressions. Waiting was no longer a reasonable option, and an outcry from Black, Indigenous, and other People of Colour (BIPOC) Christ followers started a ripple effect as they demanded that local and national churches respond.

The FMCiC, to be responsive to the questions and concerns arising from the broader Christian world, the larger Canadian society, and members of the Free Methodist Church in Canada, sought to form a task force. The task force was intended to help the Board of Administration (BoA) and National Leadership Team (NLT) consider the denomination’s history, its congregations and its leadership regarding racial and ethnic equity and justice.

The RJEETF was formed with 9 original members: Rev. Keitha Ogbogu and Rev. Darrin Lindsay (co-chairs), Xenia Chan, Rev. Sabrina Hinds, Raquel John-Matuzewski, Lindsay Noël, Kalesha Peters, David Wright, and Debbie Yeboah. The team was also supported by Andrea Chan and the late Dr. Tim Tang from the Tyndale Intercultural Ministry Center. We consulted members of the FMCUSA including Dr. Michael Traylor, Rev. Dr. Fraser Venter, Joshua Canada, and Rev. Katherine Howell. We were also supported by our critical friends, Rev. Dan Sheffield (Adjunct Lecturer, Tyndale University and FMCiC Pastor) and Dr. Heather Bensler (University of Calgary).

The team was given the opportunity to create a mandate for their work which is noted here:

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The RJEE Task Force will offer recommendations to the Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCiC) Intercultural Engagement Team (IET) and the Board of Administration (BoA) to empower our leaders and congregations to address the reality of racism in all its forms and the need to intentionally implement a justice and equity strategy that rejects systemic racism.

Our goal is that our movement would embody ethnic diversity, conciliation, and deep intercultural relationships as necessary markers of Biblical shalom.

This mandate was executed by considering our history, the stories of our congregations and our past and present leadership. Our work began with engaging the FMCUSA and the Tyndale Intercultural Ministries Center. The FMCUSA shared their own journey as they examined the ways their beliefs merged with their practices as an anti-racist organization. Part of their shift in practice were direct changes to their manual (the Book of Discipline) with an anti-racist statement, and the decision to hire a justice focused national leadership position and engage their leadership team with an Intercultural Specialist. The TIM Center, led by the late Dr. Tim Tang, helped us to launch our research by guiding us towards a unified set of terms, helping us structure our research questions, and assisting in the preparation of a grant proposal. Their feedback and guidance were invaluable in launching our work. For further expert support, we consulted Rev. Dan Sheffield as a critical friend and engaged Dr. Heather Bensler as a reviewer of our final draft report.

The history team engaged texts, personal interviews, and historical statistics to help them understand the FMCiC's historical engagement with Indigenous people in Canada. The results of their research demonstrated both a desire and a resistance to engage Indigenous communities. The historical Indigenous ministry was stifled by a lack of focused funding, the pursuit of assimilation, and a resistance to engaging Indigenous cultural and spiritual practices into Free Methodism. We also conducted a case study of a local congregation and the experience of racialized members. We found it noteworthy that while discrimination was experienced, there was great hesitancy to describe such encounters as "racist". One of our friendly critics found this anomaly throughout our report and encouraged us to take note of the ways that individuals may describe discriminatory encounters, and then rename it with less inflammatory language. This presents interesting questions for the FMCiC to consider:

1. Do individuals understand what racism and racial microaggressions are?
2. Why are victims of racism reluctant to note discriminatory activities that occur within the church as racist behaviours?
3. Do we have systems for pastors and leaders to understand how to address issues of racial injustice within their congregations or the denomination as a whole?

We began research on the black experience but were not able to complete this section and do hope the FMCiC will continue this aspect of research should there be a future Study Team.

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The Congregational Research Team wanted to understand the outlook and experience of congregations regarding racial justice and ethnic equity. They sought to interview pastors and congregants from a range of church demographics, including congregations that were majority white, ethnic, urban etc. The largest response was from rural white churches followed by urban diverse churches. It was evident that pastoral leadership was a key factor in influencing how congregations thought about and engaged intercultural relationships. A leader's interest, experience, and awareness of interculturalism were essential in the cultivation of a "safe" and anti racist environment within congregations. Stories emerged of church members who left worship settings due to an increase in racial and ethnic diversity in attendance and leadership, a focus on refugee sponsorship or the implementation of ministries that engaged immigrants and newcomers. While these stories were shared with our interviewers, interviewees often requested that the painful accounts not be shared. It was evident that congregations and more specifically local leaders who were willing to acknowledge differences, embrace diversity and who took on a learning posture were more successful in creating healthy intercultural relationships and congregation. To that end we encourage an intentional increase in BIPOC leadership who are equipped with intercultural tools, the implementation of IDI as a part of ministerial tracking and specific intercultural training and education for pastors and leaders.

The Leadership Research Team surveyed leadership across the FMCiC including the NLT, Nominating Committee members, MEGaP members and past and present BoA members. These conversations were held via Zoom with the intent of understanding the perspective of leaders regarding racial justice and ethnic equity. Nine themes emerged from this research. Justice emerged as a key value, yet respondents did not necessarily think the FMCiC lived this value as a priority. Another theme that arose was that pathways to leadership were largely dependent on relationship or "who you know". As we conducted interviews it was repeated that individuals within Conference did not know or did not know enough about leaders who represent the BIPOC community within the FMCiC to "shoulder tap" them for national positions. Finally, it was noted that intercultural competence remains a practice that must be cultivated at all levels of the movement to help leaders develop beyond token responses to racial justice and ethnic equity.

The leadership survey was a second tool used to understand Conference's perspectives on leadership. Unfortunately, we had low engagement from members of conference who identify as a person of colour (7%). However, the responses we did receive from BIPOC suggested distinctive differences in their perceptions of leadership in the FMCiC when compared with non BIPOC members on issues of Diversity and Inclusion. For instance, the question was asked, "Do you feel that the FMCiC demonstrates and communicates the value of Diversity and Inclusion?" Overall, 31% of the leaders agreed, while only 17% of BIPOC leaders were in agreement. For the same question, 9% of those interviewed disagreed with the premise while 33% of BIPOC persons disagreed. Likewise, when we asked if members of Conference demonstrate a commitment to creating racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion in our national leadership groups such as NLT, BoA, SCOD etc. 48% of those interviewed agreed while 50% of BIPOC disagreed. The difference in responses is hard to quantify due to the low response from those who were willing to identify as a part of the BIPOC community but does present interesting considerations for future leaders to consider.

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Both interviewees and survey respondents communicated both positive and negative stories related to race and ethnicity. Stories emerged from the research that communicated individual and congregational experiences with racial bias. This was evidenced in the types of jokes that were made, comments offered to BIPOC congregants and the vocalized resistance to considering an intentional and targeted increase in the appointment and recruitment of BIPOC leaders. We learned about individuals feeling dismissed or overlooked due to race, accents or place of birth. We also heard stories about the ways individuals found safe haven in their church communities, where others were willing to listen and the ways a designated intercultural practitioner as a part of the NLT over the past several decades was meaningful for increased intercultural engagement and understanding.

Finally, we engaged our Québec pastors both past and present. These pastors come from diverse countries that include Burundi, Congo, and Haiti. They were formed in Free Methodist churches within their home countries and chose to partner with the work and mission of the FMCiC when they came to Canada. They offer the Canadian church a global perspective of Methodism and bring experienced and mature theological understanding, and an energetic and active faith into the FMCiC. We learned about the ways missionary work helped to form them. They communicated their historic connection to the Free Methodist church and to Wesleyan thought. Naturally, language can be a barrier to greater inclusion, but the pastors and leaders are grateful for the persistence of those who make up the FMCiC leadership to communicate with them in French. The efforts to increase the usage of both French and English have become more apparent over time and are greatly appreciated, however consistency in translation is desired and necessary.

Our findings were not surprising: they are the lived or observed realities of each member of the team, both in and outside of the church. The stories of racist encounters that left individuals with an odd shame response were not simply the stories of those we interviewed, but also our stories as interviewers. Dismissive or belittling experiences that noted us as “exotic” and most likely in need of financial or other support were ours as we sat in white majority congregations. Individuals wondering if our education was sufficient, or our experience worthy of positive consideration—regardless of schools attended or roles held—are also our story. The sense that one is welcome, but only on the terms of those from the majority culture—those who do not share our experiences, history or skin colour, permeates the stories of those who put this report together. Yet, we have also been welcomed by leaders and encouraged to pursue ministry, whether in the local church or the national church. We have also been the ones who have had white congregants stand with us and for us despite the ways that the evil of racism and injustice linger. We have also been the ones who have found the FMCiC to be home.

Our home.

This document is written by those who not only see the FMCiC as she is, but also how she desires to be—a living picture of “on earth as it is in heaven”. A church whose future, whose congregations and leadership represent the beauty found in Revelation 7:9 where every tongue, tribe and nation gather to worship before the throne of God.

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This work of racial reconciliation and the acknowledgment of the beauty and power found in diversity may at a superficial glance seem to be a distraction from kingdom work. However, if we believe that our calling as Christ followers is to participate in Shalom, all things being made new, all things becoming a vision of what God envisioned in the beginning, then racial justice and ethnic equity are deeply embedded in our belief and our mission. This is difficult and at times uncomfortable work as we are invited to engage in ideas, stories and theories that might counteract the narrative of “truth” or bias that we have built around us. The gospels provide us a picture of what it looks like to face our narratives, biases, and previously held beliefs through the lens of Jesus. His lens reminds us that all the law can be summarized as “love God and love your neighbour as you love yourself”. As we go about the work of establishing healthy churches in the reach of all Canadians, your RJEE TF joyfully anticipates that you will see this work, the report, the recommendations, and inspired actions as a means to love God and to love our neighbours.

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Mandate

The RJEE Task Force will offer recommendations to the Free Methodist Church in Canada (FMCiC), the Intercultural Engagement Team (IET) and the Board of Administration (BoA) with the purpose of empowering our leaders and congregations to address the reality of racism in all its forms and the need to intentionally implement a justice and equity strategy that rejects systemic racism. Our expectation is that our movement will seek to embody ethnic diversity, conciliation, and deep intercultural relationships as necessary markers of biblical shalom.

Our objectives will be to:

1. Evaluate the FMCiC's theological and policy statements regarding racial and ethnic diversity, equality, and equity.
2. Recommend specific changes or insertions to theological and policy statements that lead to the intentional implementation of racial justice and ethnic equity.
3. Explore opportunities for adjustments to FMCiC denominational systems, with the goal of providing equitable pathways for racialized persons to participate in denominational and local church leadership.
4. Create defining terminology and resource lists that support the content related to diversity, access, equity, and social inclusion.
5. Provide pathways and advocate for individuals affected by racism in the church and the community to move towards healing, wholeness, and justice.
6. Suggest specific opportunities for local FMCiC congregations to explore, learn about, and invest in the establishment of a truly anti-racist, intercultural environment across generations.

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Recommendations and Further Research

RJEE’s recommendations emerged from three years of research, interviews, data collection, observations, and conversations. Implementation of several of these recommendations could be launched initially by short-term working committees supporting our national teams as necessary to alleviate time pressure. Where possible we have supported our recommendations with available research.

Our recommendations fall under the following categories:

Demographic Data

Recommendation #1

Gather and record demographic data that includes race and ethnicity as a means to better understand the makeup of local congregations and the cities we serve, and better equip local pastors and national leaders. **Review the 2005 FIND Study Team Report.**

Support/Summary: During our conversations with various leaders within the denomination, we were asked if we had collected relevant and updated data regarding the racial and ethnic demographic of the FMCiC organization. We discovered that data which records the placement, tenure, progress, etc. of individuals who identify as BIPOC or who are ethnically diverse is not retained, thereby making it difficult or impossible to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of our diversity pursuits.

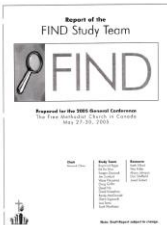
- **Supporting Articles/Books:**

<https://ifdhe.aha.org/hret disparities/why-collect-race-ethnicity-language>

“The data may also help evaluate population trends and help ensure nondiscrimination on the basis of race and national origin, such as providing meaningful access for persons with limited English proficiency.”

- **FMCiC Research:**

Double-click on the pushpin icons to open the documents



FIND Study Team Report



Charting Our Reach



Intentional IC Development

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Recommendation #2

Conduct further research into how the Free Methodist Church in Canada has interacted with Black People historically, to review and analyze the FMCiC's engagement with ethnic equity and racial justice over time.

Support/Summary: This research will allow the FMCiC to consider the areas where it has been successful with respect to its engagement of and care of BIPOC peoples, and the areas where it has fallen short. Furthermore, an exploration of the past will help reveal where the current struggles of BIPOC peoples can be attributed to imperialist dominations, structures, and desires of the past. This will allow the FMCiC to intentionally resist these structures and systems that existed in the past and continue to exist now, to forge a more inclusive future.

Training (internal and external)

Recommendation #3

To help combat racism and encourage integration of diverse ethnicities within our congregations and among our leadership, **create and/or provide educational resources** that offer an understanding of diversity as God-designed. For this to be comprehensive, we recommend including the historical, sociological, and theological roots of racial and ethnic bias. The curation of these resources could include the following:

1. In collaboration with an Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) consultant, post secondary institution, or seminary, **design a FMCiC foundational course** which covers a theological understanding of diversity and the resultant blessings (such as creativity and innovation) and challenges (such as racial bias and the hurt it causes).
2. In conjunction with an IDI consultant, **develop a training module** covering intercultural awareness and include within the standard training for FMCiC National leaders and Ministry Centre staff, then repeat this training regularly.
3. **Make the IDI training mandatory** for ministerial candidates and current appointed pastors along with the national staff.
 - o Note: Two IDI consultants are members of our denomination, and the TIM centre has at least one qualified consultant available. We also have historical IDI data which may be useful for comparison.

Support/Summary: The congregational and leadership research revealed that healthy intercultural experiences require strong intercultural awareness. Some pastors expressed a desire to engage their congregations in a more multi-ethnic and multicultural way ongoing but lacked helpful tools. In our research we encountered stories of performative diversity initiatives that left the systemic roots of racial and ethnic bias untouched, fear that unfair bias could emerge as a result of focusing on racial justice and ethnic equity. Through our survey, we saw that the experiences of racialized members of the FMCiC in comparison to non-racialized members were understood differently. We noted that these stories and experiences demonstrate the need for greater formal intercultural education.

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Intentional, foundational education will help cultivate a new culture of pastors and congregants who understand how important it is to acknowledge, learn about and learn from the varied experiences of Canada's ethnic minorities.

- **Supporting Articles/Books:**

<https://www.idiinventory.com/>

“The IDI provides quantitative and qualitative data to support and guide developmentally appropriate actions for individuals and groups. IDI Group Profile results can be used to inform and shape the focus of developmental opportunities for teams, departments, and organizations. For individuals, a customized self-directed Intercultural Development Plan (IDP) guides them through a series of developmentally appropriate activities and self-reflections to increase their intercultural capability.”

Recommendation #4

To better prepare leaders and congregations for the changing landscape of demographics and cultures in Canada and Canadian churches, we recommend that ministerial candidates be given the opportunity to engage and serve in a variety of Canadian ministry settings. **Diversifying environments** for interactions, training, internships, and/or placements, assists in the introduction of different cultural groups, diverse and multi-ethnic congregations, and congregations of varying size and community makeup.

Support/Summary: In our research we noted that within local churches, as the influx of minority ethnic groups increased, the presence of majority culture congregants decreased. Also, the majority of our congregations have not experienced pastoral leadership from a member of a minority ethnic group. It became clear that the experiences and perspectives of racialized and ethnic minorities were different from those of Canada's majority culture. It was evident that individuals from ethnocentric congregations struggled to understand or value what diverse community or congregant members could contribute. We also noted that local pastors were often the ones to lead the way in cultivating an inclusive environment. By engaging our leaders with various cultural and ethnic groups during their formation, we can help cultivate a more understanding and inclusive culture as a denomination.

Education

Recommendation #5

Commit to identifying and minimizing barriers to accessing scholarships and financial aid to intentionally develop leaders from all people groups. In this pursuit, specifically be mindful of those groups which are most underrepresented as pastoral leaders, lay leaders, etc. Possible actions include the following:

1. Track who is accessing scholarships and financial aid. Follow up with underrepresented pastors and lay leaders about these resources.

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2. Send regular updates on educational resources for pastors and lay leaders.
3. Create a FAQ for incoming leaders and pastors on the website.
4. Given that research indicates that an increasing percentage of churches will be led by new immigrant pastors, MEGaP should highlight specific opportunities, supports, and processes for the credentialing and education journeys (can also be embedded into the MEGaP process, core courses, and/or as separate seminars) for pastors new to the FMCiC.
5. Consider providing scholarships for English as a Second Language or French as a Second Language education.
6. Provide an easily accessible FAQ page on the FMCiC website to clarify the process of transferring credentials from other denominations to the FMCiC.

Support/Summary: The leadership interviews and surveys revealed a sense that the low diversity in leadership within congregations and within national teams correlates to insufficient intentionality in the formation of diverse leaders. There is a perceived fear of tokenism and that establishing diversity minimums could lower the quality of leaders. However, as the demographics of Canada and the Canadian church shift, our systems must ensure equity in the ordination and ordination transfer processes. The urgent need for pastors should encourage us to help minority leaders to meet the educational requirements to be pastors and leaders here in Canada and to obtain their credentials, particularly those who have been pastors or church leaders in their countries of origin. Supporting potential immigrant leaders by reducing some of the information gaps and other stresses present in the pursuit of educational requirements in a new country can aid in establishing a culturally and theologically prepared, yet diverse leadership pipeline.

Advocacy

Recommendation #6

Develop an arm's length Human Resources (HR) system where racial and ethnic discrimination and other issues can be addressed by an unbiased party. This should extend beyond Ministry Centre staff to pastors and other local church leaders.

Support/Summary: The creation of HR systems and HR training can help ameliorate the negative experiences that ethnic minorities face within church cultures. We realized through the research that minorities who face negative racial encounters do not always feel safe enough to address these issues. This was noted in both national and local church encounters. A clear process to resolve grievances related to race, ethnicity or other sensitive issues from an arms length perspective may increase confidence in the denomination's willingness to walk with individuals towards a fair, unbiased resolution.

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Addressing Connectionalism

Recommendation #7

Create a recruiting system for the Nominating Committee that is policy driven and equity based to encourage ethnic minorities to consider positions of leadership and participate in the leadership selection and evaluation processes. (i.e., personnel team, hiring team, etc.).

Support/Summary: The denomination has a specific focus on leadership development and selection that relies on the method of “shoulder tapping”. Shoulder tapping relates to us as a connection-based organisation where “who knows you” is one of the strongest determinants of upward career or leadership mobility. While there are positives to having an organisation that focuses on relationships as a means for leadership, there is the possibility that lesser-known leaders will not be “shoulder tapped” for national teams, committees and positions. We believe that one benefit of connectionalism in the FMCiC is the increased familiarity with the gifts given to all for the work of the Kingdom and the Spirit-led, unbiased selection from a wider range of possible known options. Evaluating means and methods of centering BIPOC voices so that they can be fairly and properly considered for local and national teams is a matter of equity and importance. It was noted by some participants in the leadership research that they didn’t have relevant data on or knowledge of BIPOC leaders. Cultivating opportunities for BIPOC leaders to engage in more visible teams and leadership roles helps to establish a culture shift in both the highlighting and recognition of effective leaders from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Elevating BIPOC voices benefits rather than takes away from the denomination. Intentionally including qualified candidates from minority ethnic or racial backgrounds does not equate to choosing an unqualified person for a role but offers another qualified option for consideration. This is an opportunity to demonstrate that a slate of qualified candidates can include qualified BIPOC leaders.

- Note: a high percentage of immigrants involved in ministry are well educated, though they may not have Canadian experience.
- **Supporting Articles/Books:**
<https://fortune.com/2021/02/27/diversity-inclusion-talent-pipeline-business/>

“So the next time someone says that finding diverse talent for all levels of their organization is a pipeline problem, remember: What they really should explore are their underlying systems and processes. They must also be courageous to challenge the embedded perceptions that exist across their culture. Because that’s what’s really holding them back.”

Recommendation #8

Consider using regular English to French translation for all outgoing documents and conversations. This allows for information to be communicated clearly in both official languages. As the

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demographics of the FMCiC shift and change further translation may be required to meet the needs of a changing Canada.

Support/Summary: This aids in connectionalism across the country and empowers our French speaking pastors and leaders to fully participate at all levels. This consistency facilitates easier and more immediate engagement from French speaking pastors and leaders.

The Immigrant Experience

Recommendation #9

Conduct further research into the immigrant experience as it pertains to faith, church leadership, the passing on of faith through generations, and the role of immigrants in the future of the Canadian church. Given the increasing need to integrate new pastors, be mindful that immigrants tend to be multi-vocational when entering ministry. Our leadership programs, such as ministers' conferences, are not always easily accommodated. Consider virtual, weekend or evening options for our connection times to help immigrant pastors build relationships within the denomination. Many immigrants are also unfamiliar with our traditional FMCiC camping and cottaging culture. Find ways to include these varied ethnic groups into our camps' programming, in planning and/or participation, thereby helping to build connectionalism and provide an atmosphere of belonging.

Support/Summary: We observed that many congregations are aware of shifts in their communities—the ethnic and cultural makeup is changing. It is also noted that the FMCiC tends to help newcomers to Canada plant new churches, however those churches are not consistently producing FMCiC leaders. Better understanding of the immigrant experience, the dynamics their children face as they integrate into Canada, and consideration of the role of first- and second-generation Canadians in the establishment of thriving and growing churches will better position the denomination for leadership development, church growth and church planting.

- **Supporting Articles/Books:**

<https://www.cardus.ca/research/faith-communities/research-brief/religion-and-belief-among-immigrants-to-canada/>

“Survey data from 2022 suggest that immigrants’ beliefs and practices make them more likely than people born in Canada to fall on the more committed end of the Spectrum and to see a larger role for religious expression in public life than those born in Canada. Those born in another country are twice as likely as those born in Canada to be Religiously Committed. Nearly seven in ten people born in Canada can be categorized as Spiritually Uncertain or Non-religious, compared to just half of immigrants to Canada.”

Submitted by: The Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force

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Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force

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Theology

Recommendation #10

Have SCOD curate a list of resources that examines the concept of the *imago Dei* from an RJEE lens . This includes conversations around how the church should value unity and diversity. Provide ways for the FMCiC to present a unified understanding of the theological responsibilities the Church must shoulder in order to engage in issues of racial justice and ethnic equity. Develop Free Methodist language regarding what it means to be made in the image of God, given diversity, ethnicity, and varied physical characteristics. This could include:

1. Specific anti-racism statements and policies within our Manual (reviewing the theological work and statements from the FMCUSA in parallel)
2. Curating (Canadian) academic resources in the Wesleyan tradition that speak to the theological importance of racial and ethnic justice and equity and encouraging new scholarship along this vein (in journals, academic and pastoral conferences, etc.)

- **Supporting Articles/Books:**

Consider the input of Rev. Dan Sheffield from FMCiC and Rev. Dr. Fraser Ventner from FMCUSA.

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Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force

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Congregational Survey

In this new life one's nationality or race or education or social position is unimportant; such things mean nothing. Whether a person has Christ is what matters, and He is equally available to all. ~ Colossians 3:11 TLB

The Congregational Research sub-committee was tasked with the mandate to compile data regarding the outlook and experience of congregations regarding racial justice and ethnic equity. They elected to conduct a phenomenological study. This report will discuss: the research statement and questions asked; the strategies that were employed for the fieldwork conducted; the methods for data analysis that helped uncover emerging concerns and themes from the interviews; the findings and the themes that emerged from the data; and lastly, implications from our findings as well as limitations of the research.

Fieldwork Strategies

Our research question for this study was: How is racial justice and ethnic equity understood and experienced by FMCiC congregation lay people, leaders, and pastors? Stemming from this, we compiled the following questions.

1. How do you understand race and ethnicity? When you hear the two terms, is there a difference?
2. What is the makeup of this congregation with respect to racial/ethnic diversity and what is the makeup of the community surrounding the church?
3. Talk about ethnic diversity in your experience of church, what has your experience of ethnic diversity in the church been like?
4. What is the ethnic make-up of your church leadership currently? What has been the ethnic make-up of church leadership in your experience? In the last ten years who has been a part of your congregational leadership?
5. How have leaders been received if they have been members of ethnic minorities? How has the leadership served the congregation / how has leadership been received generally?
6. (if applicable) Would you consider yourself an ethnic minority or a racialized person? What positive or negative experiences have you had within your community and your congregation as a racialized person?
7. What if any examples of racial injustice have you seen/experienced in the church?
8. How has your congregation addressed racial injustice? Why or why not?

We left these interview questions as open as possible to keep an open mind and allow the interviewees to use their own language to describe their experiences. Unless asked by the interviewee, we opted not to give any examples when clarifying our questions in order to avoid guiding the interviewee in his or her answer.

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Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force

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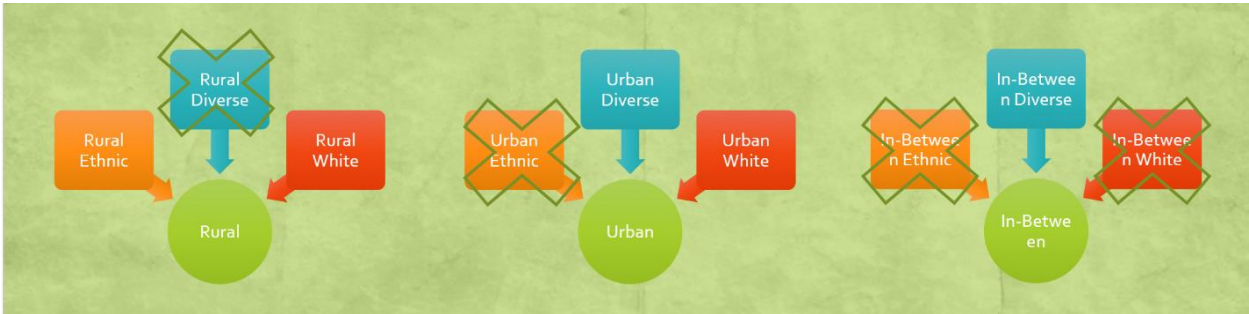
We conducted these interviews over Zoom. All of the interviewees consented to having us record the interviews, which allowed us to re-listen to the interviews at a later time and increase clarity. We conducted a total of 11 interviews. For ethical safeguarding, given the possibility of causing participants discomfort, they were told they could withdraw from the study at any point. All of our interviewees are adults who consented to being interviewed and recorded, on the condition of keeping confidentiality.

Data Analysis

Data triangulation is a critical component of the research because it provides an opportunity to verify the information given by the interviewees, with the intention to provide a more comprehensive view of the research questions. As such, we categorized churches in the following ways:

- Geographical Distribution: Rural, Urban, In-Between
- Ethnicity: Ethnic, Diverse, and White

No rural diverse churches, urban ethnic churches, in-between ethnic churches, and in-between white churches responded to our invitation to participate in the research (Image 1).



(Image 1: Categorization of Churches)

We received the most responses from rural white churches (4 interviews), followed by urban diverse (3 interviews), while each of the remaining categories were 1 or 2 interviews. Once all the data was collected, we went through our interview notes and began highlighting according to our research question. We assigned a specific colour for each research question and looked for responses from the data that matched each respective question, highlighting that section with the corresponding research question. After highlighting the data, we copy and pasted the quotes and notes directly under each research question in an Excel spreadsheet and separated these by source. We then reviewed all the data for each question, looked for repeating words and ideas from a single source, and then compared them to see if other sources also mentioned similar words or ideas.



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Findings and Themes Emerging from the Data

Given the small sample size, we are unable to make generalized conclusions from the data. However, there are some commonalities and impactful messages that appear in the narratives. The following section will discuss key observations and some themes which have emerged from said observations. These observations primarily centre around: leadership influence, proximity and tensions, education, outreach practices, and minority concerns.

Leadership Influence

In many of the interviews, it was clear that the pastors and local church leaders were a key influence in how congregations thought about and engaged in intercultural relationships. Pastoral passion for diversity and the willingness to be uncomfortable, for example, in stepping out front to facilitate and participate in difficult conversations and interactions, was seen to be a signal of the depth of a church's engagement in intercultural relationships within the context of the local church. One church which has a recent history of engaging with the challenges of deliberately embracing diversity has seen its leadership tackle racist rhetoric head-on. A couple apparently felt comfortable disparaging a refugee family that the church was sponsoring to a leader. This comfort level was misplaced as the pastor pointedly reminded them that the church supported ethnic and cultural diversity and that they should examine whether the church would be a good fit for them.

Moreover, the passion and effort to foster diversity within a congregation was noted to be related in part to the influence of the leader's background, exposure and/or experience especially in peer groups, or in their curiosity and interest in other cultures. A passionate lay leader described her own family's heritage of reaching out to others of diverse backgrounds. She noted that a cornerstone of her grandfather's ministry was local visitation and outreach that extended to ministry in Haiti. Her grandmother's family worked in a war-torn African nation. Another pastor who was a major influence in the early development of her church worked fervently on missions. "Their focus was so much on mission, global as well as local, and it has just kind of carried [on through the church.]"

Further, several interviewees' comments implied that healthy intercultural experiences require strong intercultural awareness and exemplary cross-cultural relations from the leader. This was dependent on how pastors are thinking about the reality of others' experiences, their own self-awareness in their own worldviews, being teachable, fostering curiosity within themselves, and having a strong value for being interdependent with others. Some of the pastors interviewed made a point of going beyond programs and church meals, to be personally curious about the differences in cultures, including body language, ways of speaking, ways of worshiping and appreciating (sometimes personally embracing) those differences. One pastor currently serving a diverse congregation described personal efforts to connect families from different backgrounds over Sunday lunch hosted by the pastor and observed that the fruit of deeper connection was slow to come by but insisted, "We've got to keep leading the way and showing how it can be done."

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Proximity and Tensions

A consistent theme emerging from this study was that as the presence of ethnic groups increased within the local context, the presence of white congregants decreased. The factors that forge lasting, strong relationships between Christians of different ethnicities and cultures require examination. One congregant told a pastor, “I’m going to another church because I just feel I can’t make friends.” This congregant had been attending the church for decades. The pastor reflected that the congregant had seen Anglo friends leave, was no longer comfortable, and could not envisage becoming close friends with fellow believers in the congregation from other ethnicities. Another family was heard observing aloud that “nobody looks like us anymore” and eventually left the church. Similarly, another pastor spoke of a family from an ethnic minority who appeared to be happily embedded in the church family but left after eight years to join an ethnic church because of the attraction of the familiar homogenous cultural experience. In a couple of interviews the narrative suggested a widespread lack of effort to reach across racial, ethnic boundaries (by almost all involved) to build relationships. These and other examples also suggest a desire by some attendees to interact with a certain “critical mass” of congregants that are like them in a meaningful way. An important question is what characteristics are most important for congregants to feel a sense of connection or interest in making friends. Some congregants with very fixed views on what is “proper” and “how things should be done,” both of which may be connected to middle-class values and perceptions of dignity, experience difficulty re-examining those values and relating to others from other cultures who have competing values. One pastor’s approach to this with respect to valuing time commented,

“We try to start things close to on time and recognize that we take the time to do what needs to be done. And that’s the time we’ll take, and we’ll do our best to be mindful of people’s other things, but to a certain degree, if you’ve come to church you’re there to be church and that might happen in a timely fashion or not.”

In other words, even “small” things like how one values time is dependent on cultural context, and this reality is not often recognised, or acknowledged.

As one interviewee noted in that person’s own context, there was a repeated identification of the “Other”, e.g. tensions over refugees and immigration. A question that was voiced in another church was, “Do we help people from ‘outside’ or do we focus on ‘Canadians?’” One couple that left the church over other stated reasons wondered why the church focused on mission in other countries when there was so much need in Canada. On the other side of the tension in a different place, an adherent left the congregation to find another church that would be more receptive to their justice work among immigrants. In another instance, one pastor admitted to supporting immigrants in what some might deem as questionable actions, commenting “We supported a few people as they’ve had to fight with immigration to stay in Canada ... nobody’s like well, is this really something we should support? No, we understand the immigration system. It sucks.”

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Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force

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Education

On the terms of race, racialization, whiteness, etc., it is clear that the disagreement on terminology and ideas around race abounds. We asked in several instances what these terms meant, and in many instances, discovered that some of these terms were used interchangeably. For example, definitions of race ran the gamut: “a created construct”, “the physical genetic makeup of who a person is”, “[related to] your/your family’s country of origin”, “a physical thing. It’s skin color. It’s phenotype. It’s hair texture.” Etc. Interviewees also expressed that in order to care for congregations, churches must be clear on the history and the construction of race to help all under their care to navigate and understand the consequences of the idea on the lives of racialized persons, in a world where an interviewee could be asked by a child in the community, “What kind of half-breed are you?”. (The child’s background was not provided.) A significant gap noted by some interviewees was the absence of acknowledgement or understanding of the reality of racialized peoples as quite different from those who are not racialized. Often, the desire to recognize this absence is associated with being politically or socially progressive/politically “liberal”.

Outreach Practices

Another concern that emerged from the data was the ways in which missionary work has been and continues to be portrayed or marketed within the local congregation. Interviewees noted that missionaries’ depictions of regions and people groups are largely negative and not fully accurate, causing offense to those within our congregations who are from those countries. One leader recounted a congregant approaching on behalf of her community:

“[The specific ethnic] community took offense to the missionaries’ presentation ... It was only the poverty; they never showed any of the prosperity of the country or anything. They only showed all the bad, and they’re like [the country] is an amazing country with universities and developed cities. And like they visited the poor areas. So that’s what they were showing. ... That’s not all of [the country]. And she was upset and in tears about it and through the conversation, she also talked to me about racist comments that she had received even in her workplace and so it dug up some of that pain.”

Note: these were not FMCiC missionaries, but they were missionaries given a platform by an FMCiC church.

Internal Racialized Minority Concerns

Finally, some disturbing stories of prejudiced behaviour within local congregations were told. We have been asked not to share the details of some of the most heart-wrenching and incriminating stories. This creates a conundrum for us in that it prevents us from providing concrete examples of the authentic deep hurts that still occur in our church communities and helping the reader to understand the realities. However, we hope insight will be gained from the examples shared.

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Communication differences, in particular difficulty with accents and limited shared Western/Canadian experiences, can be a hindrance to relationships. Rather than admiration of bi-lingual or multi-lingual immigrants for their linguistic ability, immigrants' thick accents sometimes elicit condescending behaviours from some congregants. One leader who commented on this said,

“I’ve seen in the past some disrespect for certain people, especially if someone still has quite a thick accent. And you can see where they’re doing translation work in their head ... There have been tendencies to treat [someone who kind of struggles with that process a bit] as not as intelligent.”

This church, that was primarily attended by immigrants, felt that there was a disconnect with their largely anglo-heritage Canadian neighbours. Their pastor reflected:

“When they hired a new pastor they wanted somebody who was connected with the denomination and understood Canadian culture better. I was the diverse hire. I think it’s hilarious but also thoughtful that someone looked around and [said,] ‘there’s very few ... white people in our church and maybe we need a leader who can help us bridge this gap’”.

In other conversations some questioned whether there is any real or perceived education (or Canadian experience) gap that is contributing to the limited presence of racialized peoples in leadership. In some multicultural or even primarily homogenous immigrant settings, interviewees noted a deference to leaders from an Anglo heritage and correspondingly very few leaders from racialized people groups.

Racial slurs are sometimes excused, even by those racialized, as caused by ignorance – maybe to temper the likelihood of harsh responses.

“People ... mean well but [are] not aware of potentially what they are doing or saying or how they are viewing things ... and it is hurtful. We have an indigenous community somewhat near to us and [there are] just certain ideas or thoughts about that without understanding the history...”

We were told of a typical response to racialized overtones, where the congregant quietly left to find a church of their cultural background. A pastor recounted a situation where the mother in a “mixed” marriage disclosed quietly that her husband and child had a negative experience in the church but “she didn’t want to give me details and talk about it. ... and then she [and the family] just kind of faded away too.” It was interesting that in these scenarios remaining members seemed to persist, both comfortable and unaware of their biases and the resultant impact. As the pastor shared, the mother’s position was, “I don’t want to cause an issue. I don’t want people to be confronted, but I just want you to know that that was our experience.”

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Limitations

There are a number of limitations to this study. Primarily, the data pool was much smaller than we would have liked, and we did not have the opportunity for re-examination with our interviewees due to time limitations and major difficulties in our own life circumstances. We also did not take into consideration demographic factors that may have influenced their responses, such as age, gender, and socio-economic status, and how they may have been impacted by these factors in gauging their experience within the local congregation. As we only conducted 11 interviews, this is by no means an exhaustive or conclusive study, though several notable issues have been raised.

Implications

Even in this small sample, it was clear that some churches and leaders were thinking and caring deeply about how to love their neighbours and paying attention to those who do not look like the predominant demographic. It is encouraging that, despite the tug of comfort, some are deliberately stepping into discomfort to embrace diverse cultures, resisting the tendency to make undeserved generalizations about entire people groups.

There are several implications for this study. The first is that creating healthy intercultural congregations begins with the leadership and their willingness and eventual commitment to engage in intercultural awareness. Second, likewise, congregations must question their own biases in their values and be willing to follow leaders in becoming more interculturally aware as they welcome people who are not like them. Third, there is a role for SCOD in examining the *imago Dei* along with the concept of race and helping to create resources on racial justice and ethnic equity so as to stem the problem of people speaking past each other. Fourth, missionaries and churches supporting overseas missions work must change their language regarding the countries to which they have been sent. We must also question our modes as we examine the future of missionary work and how it can be shared in presentations most helpfully. How would the language of partnership—full partnership with indigenous movements—change the conversation? And finally, we are called to take seriously the wounds of racialized peoples and be particularly responsible to care for those who have been wounded within the local FMCiC congregation.

Looking towards this goal, we also recognize that there is a significant lack of BIPOC leadership at both the lay and pastoral leadership, and there must be greater effort in raising these leaders up so that entire congregations might flourish. This includes providing support for BIPOC leaders financially, spiritually, and mentoring them through the leadership pathways within FMCiC. Some initiatives that can be implemented to provide exposure and mentoring would include facilitating short-term ministerial internships in congregations that are diverse, homogeneous ethnic and homogenous white; include the IDI process as part of ministerial tracking; provide a structured forum for pastors who have implemented effective methods to share them; provide a training in mindfulness, curiosity, and intercultural relationships generally.

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Surveying Leadership Across FMCiC

This sub-committee surveyed leadership across FMCiC in order to understand the varying views on diversity and inclusion and the variable impacts on Black and Indigenous peoples as well as people of colour in leadership. This task was two-pronged: the first, a set of interviews with national leaders and the second, a survey of a similar set of questions sent out to General Conference members. This report is thus organized: a discussion on fieldwork strategies; data analysis; findings and themes that emerge; then limitations. The National Leadership Interviews and Diversity and Inclusion Surveys will be discussed separately.

National Leadership Interviews

Fieldwork Strategy

The data pool for national leaders was significantly smaller than General Conference members; as such, we prioritized their interviews. Likewise, we were unsatisfied with only interviews with national leadership; we wanted input from leadership from FMCiC as a whole, and so elected to conduct a quantitative study. This was also to triangulate and to cross-reference whether the patterns as noticed by denominational leadership were also consistent with congregational leadership. Given the mandate, we set these as our research questions:

1. What is your ministry story?
2. Why did you choose to stay or leave FMCiC?
3. Was/Is Diversity and Inclusion considered a priority within denominational leadership/local congregations and denominational structures?
4. Have you faced barriers to leadership within the FMCiC that you would attribute to racism or racial discrimination?
5. How could the FMCiC better address issues around diversity and inclusion? How is the denomination addressing these issues positively?
6. If you could communicate one thing to the FMCiC leadership regarding racial justice and ethnic equity as it relates to our denomination and the broader church, what would it be?

Like the congregational study, we left these questions as open as possible for interviewees' responses to be in their voice. We conducted these interviews over Zoom. All the interviewees consented to having us record the interviews, which allowed for us to pick up on non-verbal cues during the interview, as we could re-listen to the interviews at a later time. We conducted a total of 15 interviews. In terms of ethical safeguarding, given the possibility of causing participants discomfort, they were told they could withdraw from the study at any point. All our interviewees are adults who consented to being interviewed and recorded, on the condition of keeping confidentiality.

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Data Analysis

The individuals surveyed were members of the National Leadership Team, the Nominating Committee, Board of Administration, Ministerial Education Guidance and Placement Committee, as well as staff at the Ministry Centre. In total, 15 were interviewed. The interviewees have been anonymized here.

Findings and Themes

There are nine themes emerging from the interviews. They have been categorized as justice, theology, pathways to leadership, the importance of diversity and inclusion (DEI), homogenous leadership, intercultural competency, connectionalism, racism, prejudice and bias, and issues denominational leaders should address. There are also significant outliers emerging from the interviews but which we also thought were worth mentioning.

For multiple respondents, justice was a key value, with one person noted that it ought to be the vision for the church to “nurture the right things.” In two instances, Kingsview Free Methodist Church in Etobicoke, ON, was named as inspiration that FMCiC could become more inclusive—in response to Kingsview’s response to the death of George Floyd. One person said that the affirmation of women in ministry led them to the FMCiC, and in particular, “I heard the Bishop speak about women in ministry as a priority.” Two interviewees noted that because of a lack of diversity and voice, they chose to “engage to be a voice for women and POC” and to “say yes to help provide that diversity.” In one instance, one interviewee noted that “the system seems bent towards injustice.”

In terms of understanding theology and praxis, one interviewee wryly noted that FMCiC has interesting ideas about being a neighbour, with others noting that FMCiC pulls from various traditions and ideas. Another person noted that broader perspectives would give the denomination a better picture of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Finally, one interviewee noted that diversity and inclusion work is fundamental to being a Jesus-follower; as such theological vision and reflection is necessary towards that work.

Most interviewees noted that their pathways to leadership was largely embedded in relationship. The more one was known, the more opportunities they had, whether they were cradle FMCiC members or had served in many FM churches and thus “were given specific opportunities.” One interviewee noted, “People noticed my gifts and I found identity and belonging in the church. I wonder if I had presented my full ethnicity if this would have been so.”

On the topic of diversity and inclusion and its importance in the denomination, answers ranged from “it has not been important to the denomination,” to acknowledgement that diversity and inclusion efforts have largely been aspirational with room to grow and the need for greater intentionality. Others wondered if this effort was merely promotional, or to “look good,” and noted “it feels like ticking boxes.” One interviewee noted that it was “something we thought was nice to have, but didn’t account for the challenges along the way,” with another saying, “we fall behind in implementation.” Others mentioned the ways in which diversity and inclusion have been attempted:

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Representation was always discussed regionally rather than focusing on race/ethnicity and gender.

Hitting gender diversity is our starting point because it is easier to reach than ethnic diversity.

At a national level, ethnic diversity has become a recent priority. We initially focused on the East-West divide and Male-Female.

However, everyone agreed that diversity and inclusion was an important issue for the denomination. One person noted: “diversity should be more than a ‘nice’ thing. It is essential to our survival and the future of the church in Canada,” while another noted that diversity should be understood as “something that... benefits the organization,” rather than an “obligation.”

Several interviewees noted that the leadership was largely homogenous. While some have said the denomination is welcoming, it was observed that leadership was largely white, male, and middle-aged. This created a problem, said one interviewee, in that the few people of colour known to the denomination were often oversaturated with requests, and are largely “not represented in denominational leadership.” Moreover, one interviewee noted that BIPOC often sense a “lack of equality... when they sit on national teams.” One person said, “we value diverse teams, although our national leadership is homogenous,” while another added, “The composition of our NLT gives a picture of who makes it through our system. While the denominational leadership has increased in diversity since the interviews were first completed, it is notable that BIPOC had to be recruited from outside of the denomination as suitable candidates were either not evident or not “shoulder tapped” from within the denomination. A lack of an intentionally cultivated pool of diverse pastors is evidenced in this selection process. A question that arises from this observation is, are the talents and skills of pastors of diverse ethnic backgrounds unknown, unwanted or not present within this population. Regardless of how this question is answered, intentional investment in the development of and recruitment of ethnically diverse male and female leadership is something worth further investigation. This is also evidenced by a lack of women and BIPOC who make it through to national leadership.” Another asserted, “National teams, specifically BoA and NLT, demonstrate racial and ethnic diversity are not a priority.” Yet another person said, “We say we value diverse teams, [but] our national leadership is homogenous.” In addition to this, one interviewee remarked that MEGaP has had very few persons of colour. Finally, one questioned, “How much of the vote [at General Conference] is retired and white?” They then added, “The proof will be in future slates and nominations to see if change is truly being embedded.”

Regarding intercultural competency, interviewees were generally interested and noted that it should be a priority within FMCiC. Diversity occurred, it was observed, under two conditions: if the pastor was interested in interculturalism and if the congregation was willing to say yes to diversity. One interviewee said that there was very little local church engagement on the issue, while another remarked that there was no diversity and inclusion training, and very little intercultural training available. Other interviewees noted that there was unconscious bias present within denomination, and moreover, the problem was not personal, but systemic. Another interviewee remarked that he wished people of diverse backgrounds could be encouraged to complete terms on teams.

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There were several questions posed by the interviewees: How do we let people know they are welcome and chosen not just because of their gender and ethnicity, but also because of their gifts and skills? In the same spirit, how do we make space without tokenism? How do we set people up for success regardless of background? And lastly, how do we move from conversations to tools?

Finally, it was noted by two separate interviewees that Dan Sheffield (former Director of Global and Intercultural Ministries, current Lead Pastor, Grapeview Church) had been invaluable to intercultural competency, but that “it hasn’t always had willing participants,” and that “in his absence, some of this has aged poorly.”

Connectionalism was noted as an avenue for engaging in diversity and inclusion; it was also the reason noted for why diversity and inclusion have been issues within the denomination. On one hand, this strength has been a great facilitator of relationship: “I engaged with other pastors and have gotten to know them... [through] virtual engagement,” and “FMCiC feels like home.” Others simply listed “relationships” as being key to the denomination, and one interviewee noted specific individuals who were crucial to them feeling welcome in the denomination. Others however, had concerns:

We don’t know how diverse the denomination is. Having a picture of the denomination’s diversity across the country could help us know if our teams are representing the diversity.

It can be difficult to engage the Québec pastors. We often don’t hear back.

Connecting with second generation immigrants and moving them to leadership is challenging as we often want to connect with those who are “staying.”

“I encountered a lack of awareness and familiarity with POC [People of Colour]. Perceptions of POC seemed to be based on television stereotypes rather than lived experience.”

Others talked about how it is hard to include diverse voices in national leadership, ranging from “we don’t know people,” “it’s easy to default to the list of people you are familiar with,” to “we don’t have pathways to diversity and [we] assume everyone [can] follow a single path.” One interviewee remarked that the denomination is being asked to look beyond the regular names, and another expressed that the denomination ought to “seek to understand why people don’t say yes to denominational leadership. The reasons are not new.” Other interviewees suggested avenues of change: more intentional communication and getting to know one another, listen to diverse churches and leaders, and find ways to ensure ethnic churches feel like they belong, specify what the denomination is looking for. One interviewee urged the denomination to create safer spaces so that pastors can “feel comfortable to share where things can be improved.” Finally, one interviewee warned, “If we do not change, people will not stay.” Another echoed the sentiment: “Do not overestimate that people of colour will be around in the long run if nothing changes.”

Stories of racism, prejudice, and bias emerged from the interviews. One interviewee noted that it is difficult for people of colour to stay within the BoA. Others noted:

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I've had to use code-switching to engage well with some local churches that used biased or stereotypical language with me.

Sometimes leaders feel a freedom to say stereotypical or offensive comments based on race and ethnicity. There are very few ways to confront those issues. Thankfully, we now have a personnel committee.

I've witnessed inappropriate things but didn't have the position to change them.

Stories of bias have emerged and at times I have had to help people address this.

Yes, I experienced a volatile and negative reaction when discussing issues of race at a denominational leadership level. This led me to recognize my presence was nothing more than a "tick in a box."

Yes, in a local setting, a POC [Person of Colour] was told they were not as smart as other members due to colour.

Tasks in the large church were assigned by race... tasks that white people were unwilling to do were handed to POC.

I've experienced dismissal and a lack of value [for] my perspectives.

In a local context, accents can and have unfairly limited people's perception of someone's capacity.

Our response to Black Lives Matter was shameful as people seemed to see issues of racism as an "American" issue.

I've seen people be dismissed because English is not their first language and "Canada" was not their first culture.

One interviewee commented, "we also need quality people and not just choosing based on ethnicity," while another reflected that "when diversity happens, it is difficult for the person to 'fit in.'" However, not all stories were negative: "I've seen interviews where the person of colour on MEGaP was able to stand up for and advocate for candidates from ethnically diverse backgrounds."

There were a number of issues interviewees thought that leaders ought to address. First, there is acknowledgement that the National Leadership Team is "encouraging mindfulness around diversity" and that there are "pathways for newcomers and immigrants to plant [churches]." It was also encouraging for some that "the denomination is willing to have the conversations and so far there seems to be a positive response to the task force" and that "diversity is not an afterthought." Further, it was positive that "we included specific requests for increased diversity on national teams at general Conference 2020" and that the IET has "started conversations to address the mistrust between people of colour and the denominational leadership." However, there were several concerns: one interviewee noted they left because they felt they "did not have a 'voice' to contribute" while another was concerned that the recommendations put forth by the task force "may not lead us forward to actual change."

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The interviewees had a variety of suggestions on how the denomination might move forward in the process of integrating diversity and inclusion. They are as follows.

- Cast diversity as a hopeful vision
- Mandate quotas
- Diversity helps us to erase “echo chambers”
- Full audit of structures ought to be required
- Create policies that have human beings in mind
- Implementing change and acknowledging what needs to be changed are priorities
- See the Québec story through to success and appreciate its cross-cultural opportunities
- Be willing to change structures to create belonging
- Do not thwart the opportunity to learn by suggesting there is nothing to learn
- Address and acknowledge the hurt that has been inflicted by the inaction and lack of genuine intention to engage and include people of colour
- Support people of colour when crisis hits their communities (i.e., after George Floyd’s death)
- Create greater awareness for local churches and pastors
- Explore and understand the immigrant experience as the denomination seeks their involvement in the local congregation and in the denomination.
 - Understand the challenges of moving to a new country, re-training, caring for family in country of origin, etc.
- Further research and accommodation for multivocational ministry is needed

It was noted several times that the RJEETF was doing good work, and that their recommendations should be noted and acted upon, as they are “helpful in bringing these issues to light.” Finally, one interviewee remarked simply, “We need to be leaders in this work.”

To conclude on a bright note, interviewees observed the following:

Multiethnic was my context, my church heritage where I had the opportunity to watch people engage with God in their culture and context.

People are still willing to listen.

I love the work that I do.

Despite [the] imperfections, [FMCiC] is a good fit.

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Limitations

One significant limitation was our limited pool of interviewees. However, given that we were able to interview a significant number of national leaders, former and current, we are relatively confident that this is a good cross-section and representation of national leadership.

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Conclusion

The Free Methodist Church in Canada has intentionally engaged in the pursuit of racial and ethnic justice over its lifetime. This work came to life because of those who took notice of their neighbours and chose the path of Jesus centered love, despite social pressures, racially biased perspectives, and at times, a lack of support. We heard the stories of congregants, congregations and leaders who chose to engage with individuals from different countries, ethnic backgrounds, cultural histories and racialized perspectives with deep kindness and a desire to cultivate a culture of belonging within the FMCiC's local and national contexts. We also encountered individuals who were deeply grateful for the learning they received from the former Director of Intercultural Ministries and the current Intercultural Engagement Team. These national initiatives were instrumental in broadening our understanding of the shifting demographic landscape of Canada and the ways our churches must respond. We are grateful for the work of those who have gone before us.

We have also heard stories of hurt, rejection and disappointment as leaders and congregation members shared the ways they have encountered racism, bias and exclusion that they tie back to race, heritage, language or country of origin. Their stories, although not openly shared within the report, reminded us that the FMCiC, (which means all of us) still have work to do. Work that looks like listening and believing the stories of those whose experiences and outlooks are different than our own. Work that looks like platforming and highlighting the ministry and talent of racialized pastors and leaders. Work that looks like intentional training of current and future pastors to see the world through an intercultural lens. Work that looks like all of us participating in manifesting God's Kingdom here on earth. While statistics may help to bolster a position or idea, we hope that you can see this as less of a sociological document and more so as one that is of spiritual and theological significance. The work of racial and ethnic equity and justice is not a task that we should leave solely for government and academia to resolve, rather the church, including our own small, but mighty FMCiC can participate in leading the way. We believe that as our pastors and congregations are equipped with both a greater awareness of the realities of racism, bias, and the prevalence of white supremacy in the society that we will be equipped and inspired to offer a voice of hope, belonging and justice and racial reconciliation within the communities that we minister.

As such we have a final recommendation for the FMCiC: that we build on the work of those who have gone before our team, the work the IET is currently engaged in, and the words written within this document. We strongly recommend that a team be created to continue this work of research, listening, and implementing the recommendations we have presented to the BOA. As the work continues, we pray that new stories will be told, old hurts will be repaired, advocacy will flourish, and our congregations will take on the work of racial and ethnic equity and justice as a part of their responsibility to love and care for their neighbours.

Thank you for entrusting us with this work. We are grateful.

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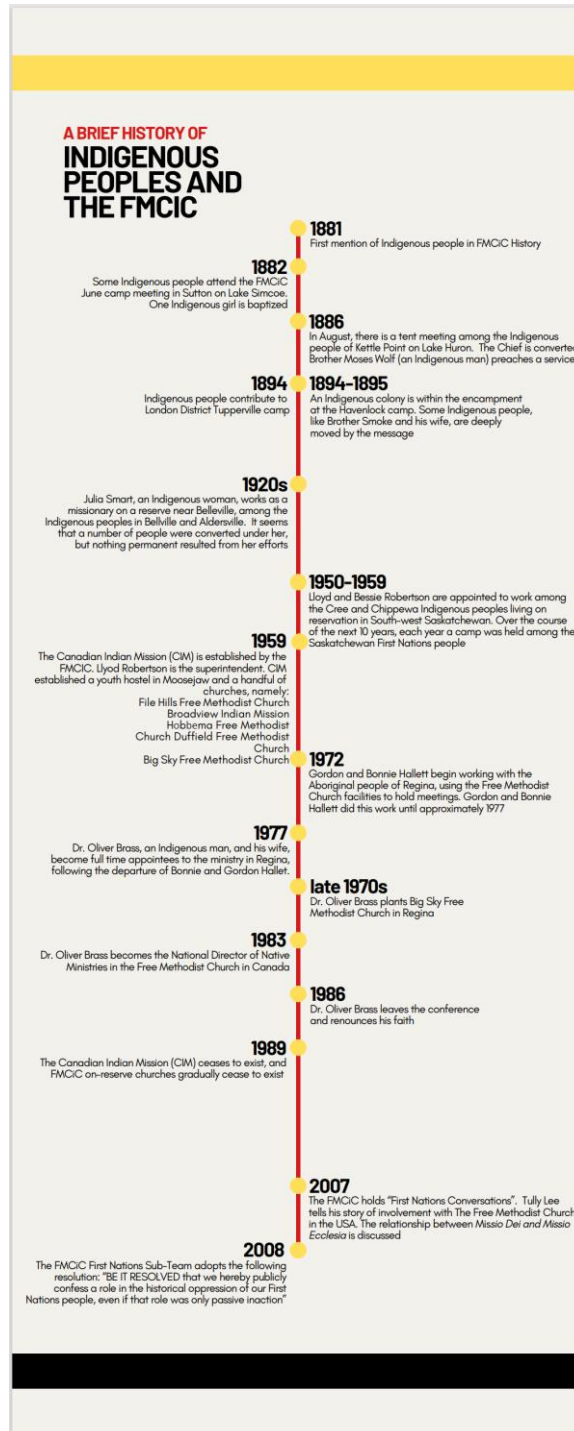


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Appendix

Appendix I: Indigenous People and the FMCiC



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Appendix II: FMCiC Historically

“The gospel of Jesus Christ, in the provision which it makes, and in the agencies which it employs for the salvation of mankind, knows no distinction of nationality, condition [or] sex...” - B.T. Roberts, 1890 General Conference Minutes, p. 131

The History Sub-committee explored how the FMCiC has interacted with Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC peoples) historically. The purpose of this exploration is to review and analyze the FMCiC’s engagement in ethnic equity and racial justice over time, in order to consider where the FMCiC has been successful and where it has fallen short with respect to engagement and care of BIPOC peoples. The History Sub-committee has chosen to limit its research to Indigenous peoples, and to organize its research using a framework meant to connect larger ideas. The framework considers 5 categories:

1. Historical Overview - What do we know about the history of the FMCiC engagement with Black or Indigenous peoples?
2. Barriers - What barriers have Black or Indigenous peoples faced with regards to becoming part of the membership or leadership in the FMCiC?
3. Evangelism - How has the FMCiC tried to share the message of the love of Jesus Christ with Black or Indigenous communities?
4. Historical Oppression - What role did the FMCiC play in the Indian Residential School system in Canada or in the Black slave trade?
5. Connecting the dots - What patterns, if any, do we see emerge?

In addition, the History Sub-committee has chosen to present two case studies that explore the FMCiC’s more recent history, to examine whether certain themes and patterns that emerged through their historic research are still present in the church today. The first case study is a history of Bramalea Free Methodist in Brampton, Ontario, as a microcosm of the larger FMCiC story. The second case study is an interview with a former FMCiC pastor, a BIPOC man, who was involved in establishing the FMCiC in Québec.

Indigenous Peoples and the Free Methodist Church in Canada

Indigenous peoples are a part of Free Methodist history and were present for some of the Free Methodist Church’s first conventions in Canada in the 1880s. Indigenous peoples are Canada’s “host people”, so naturally they were there when the Free Methodist Church began to establish itself in different regions across the country. Though the presence and even the involvement of Indigenous peoples in the early days of the FMCiC is documented, the attitude of the Free Methodist Church towards Indigenous peoples is not thoroughly explored in the sources we found.

Where the history of the relationship between the FMCiC and Indigenous peoples is discussed, it is always from the point of view of the church. There is a lack of historical sources from the point of view of Indigenous peoples. With regards to the residential school system, we did not find any sources

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to suggest that the FMCiC was directly implicated in its establishment (though there is evidence that Methodist missionaries were involved). The FMCiC's historical stance on the residential school system, and on assimilation in general, is difficult to find. The sources, or lack of sources, suggest that the FMCiC remained silent for the over 120 years that Indian Residential Schools operated in Canada.

Yet, in a resolution made in 2008, the FMCiC publicly confessed to a role in the historical oppression of the First Nations people. The FMCiC expressed its commitment to healing the relationship between the church and Indigenous peoples even if their role in the oppression was only “passive inaction”. Based on our research, it appears that “passive inaction” is an accurate description of the role of the FMCiC with respect to the residential school system.

The discussion below is formatted into four categories: (1) historical overview; (2) barriers (what barriers have Indigenous peoples faced with regards to becoming part of membership or leadership in the FMCiC?); (3) evangelism (how has the FMCiC tried to share the message of Jesus Christ's love with Indigenous communities?); and (4) residential school systems (what role did the FMCiC play in the Indian Residential School system in Canada?).

Historical Overview

In the early conferences, Indigenous peoples were welcomed by the Free Methodist Church. Their presence and even participation in these early conferences were recorded from the start. Below is a brief timeline indicating where Indigenous peoples are mentioned in the FMCiC story:

- 1881-82: This is the first mention (found) of Indigenous people in FMCiC history, recorded in *The Battle Was the Lord's*. Some Indigenous people attended the June camp meeting in 1882, which was held near Sutton on Lake Simcoe, and one Indigenous girl was baptized.
 - “The June camp meeting was held near Sutton on Lake Simcoe close to some Indian islands. Indians came and some sought the Lord, after the chief had attended and given permission. One Indian girl desired prompt baptism and it was administered by lamp light after a late service.”¹
- August 1886: Indigenous people of Kettle Point on Lake Huron made a request to the Thedford pastor for a tent meeting. The chief of the Indigenous people of Kettle Point was converted, and an Indigenous man named Brother Moses Wolf preached in a service.
 - “An interesting event in August of 1886 was a tent meeting among the Indians of Kettle Point on Lake Huron. They had asked the Thedford pastor, Rev. W. H. Burkholder, for it, and responded by seeking the Lord in altar fulls [*sic*]. Their own chief was converted and in one service an Indian himself, called Brother Moses Wolf, preached.”²

¹ John Wilkins Sigsworth, *The Battle Was the Lord's: A History of the Free Methodist Church in Canada* (Wilmore, Kentucky: First Fruits Press, 2016), electronic edition, 85.

² Sigsworth, 89.

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- 1894: Indigenous people were contributors in London District Tupperville camp
 - “There was considerable curiosity at the London District Tupperville camp but much of it turned to sympathy as the people decided this was essentially the forty-year-ago brand of Methodism. A Moraviantown Indian named W. R. Snake contributed much with his illustration-laden testimonies. R. Burnham, the Tupperville area pastor at the time, continued two weeks longer in a tent meeting.”³
- 1894-1895: An Indigenous colony was *within* the encampment at the Havelock camp, and some Indigenous people were deeply moved by the message. Notably, there is no discussion of the acceptance or rejection of Indigenous peoples’ cultural norms, nor is there any discussion on how the Indigenous colony came to be within the encampment – did the Free Methodists just claim the space? Were they invited or welcomed by the Indigenous people?
 - “An interesting note on the Havelock gathering mentions an Indian colony within the encampment. One Indian, Bro. Smoke, declared he would carry fire home with him. His wife was so touched by a message on giving, that she wished she had saved the price of her hat and had come bare-headed. As proof of her sincerity she promptly contributed some money given to her by a testing friend.”⁴
- The 1920s: Julia Smart, an Indigenous woman, worked on a reserve near Belleville and attempted to gain footing for the Free Methodist Church. There are mixed reviews on her success. It seems that a number of people were converted under her, but nothing permanent resulted from her efforts.
 - “*Bellville*-The Norrington-Cark team, we have seen, campaigned evidently without success) in this area before going to Petworth in 1888. In the 1920's an Indian lady, Julia Smart, worked an Aldersville Mission somewhere on an Indian Reserve near Belleville and even attempted a footing in the city. But again nothing permanent resulted. Not till this past decade did Belleville really feel Free Methodism. But that story comes later in "Recent Review."⁵
 - “Julia Smart (Grey), a Mohawk Indian, worked as a missionary for several years among the Indians in Belleville and Alderville, Ontario. Her efforts were not in vain, as quite a number were converted under her labors”⁶
- 1950: Lloyd and Bessie Robertson were appointed to work among the Cree and Chippewa Indians living on reservation in South-west Saskatchewan. Over the course of the next 10 years, a camp was held each year among the Saskatchewan First Nations people. In 1959, there were 100 registrants, and 70 children present sought the Lord.

3 Sigsworth, 105.

4 Sigsworth, 107.

5 Sigsworth, 141.

6 Carrie T. Burritt, *The Story of Fifty Years* (Wilmore, Kentucky: First Fruits Press, 2016), electronic edition, 201.



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- 1959 (approximately): the establishment and operation of the Canadian Indian Mission (CIM) by the FMCiC. As stated in the name, the CIM was a FMCiC mission to reach Canadian Indians. The superintendent of the CIM was Lloyd Robertson. The CIM's stated purpose was to establish churches and preaching points. The CIM often met in homes before it had church buildings. It operated for approximately 30 years, establishing a handful of churches through a small pool of leaders:
 - File Hills Free Methodist Church (previously Lauralee Indian Mission). Originally a home ministry, it later became a church that was moved on reserve. The church building, along with other churches across the country, was burned down after the discovery of the remains of Indigenous children at the Indian Residential School (IRS) in Kamloops. Oliver Brass, an Indigenous man, was one of the last pastors at File Hills Free Methodist
 - Broadview Indian Mission was located east of Regina. Keith Taylor was one of the pastors who served with Broadview Indian Mission, serving from August 1959 for about 16 months. Broadview Indian Mission was not on a reserve but was just along the border of a reserve. The language spoken in the area was Cree.
 - Hobbema Indian Reservation (renamed Maskwacis in 2014), located in Alberta, housed a Free Methodist Church that may have been called Hobbema Indian Mission. This church may still exist under another name.
 - Duffield Free Methodist Church (may have been called Duffield Indian Mission), was located close by a reserve with a little chapel.
 - Big Sky Free Methodist Church. This was a church in Regina, Saskatchewan. Dr. Oliver Brass, an Indigenous man, was the pastor of this church, and the church planter.
 - In addition, CIM ran a youth hostel in Moosejaw, from a large building owned by CN Rail. The hostel became a group home and a resource for children who needed a short-term or long-term place to stay.
- 1972: Gordon and Bonnie Hallett begin working with the Aboriginal people of Regina, using the Free Methodist Church facilities to hold meetings. Gordon and Bonnie Hallett did this work until approximately 1977.
- 1977: Dr. Oliver Brass and his wife become full time appointees to the ministry in Regina after the Halletts leave.
- Late 1970s: Dr. Oliver Brass plants the Big Sky Church in Regina.
- 1983: Dr. Oliver Brass becomes the National Director of Native Ministries in the Free Methodist Church in Canada.
- 1986: Dr. Oliver Brass leaves the conference and renounces his faith.

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- Additional notes on Dr. Oliver Brass: Dr. Brass was the first Saskatchewan First Nations person to earn a doctorate (University of Regina, 1984). He grew up in the Free Methodist Church on the Peepeekisis First Nation; he graduated from Aldersgate Free Methodist Bible College in Moose Jaw, pastored several Free Methodist churches, then planted the Big Sky Church in Regina in the late 70s. From 1983-86 he was the National Director of Native Ministries in the Free Methodist Church in Canada. In 1986 he withdrew from the conference, renouncing his faith, and became president of Saskatchewan Indian Federated College. Dr. Oliver Brass died in 1997.
- 1989 (approximately): The Canadian Indian Mission (CIM) ceases to exist. At this time, there is a push going on in the FMCiC to discontinue the subsidizing of churches. It is notable that this is not long after Dr. Oliver Brass is elected superintendent of the CIM/National Director of Native Ministries. As CIM was a mission with the same giving base as conference, funding was a struggle for CIM. The push to get away from subsidies was “the beginning of the end”. The FMCiC on-reserve churches gradually ceased to exist.

Barriers

Two themes emerged as a result of the research: (1) lack of acceptance of Indigenous cultures and worldviews, and (2) lack of support (financial and otherwise) for Indigenous leaders. Below are some excerpts and examples to support these inferences.

1. Lack of Acceptance of Indigenous Cultures and Worldviews (excerpts and examples)

- 2007 FMCiC First Nations Conversations (Notes)
 - Tully Lee told his story of involvement with The Free Methodist Church in the USA over the past 20 years or so. He discussed how the FMC work among Navajo people began under the Cheesemans. His current situation is very tenuous with the FMC in the US. A crucial dimension of his story seems to be the lack of acceptance and recognition of culture and worldview as factors in the development of ministry, by FM denominational leaders in the USA.⁷
- *A Cry for Equality at the Feast*, Brander McDonald
 - Also, local non-native Indigenous Christians have a genuine fear of understanding native traditional cultural values and worldviews, as they are seen as not “redeemable” for God or for the spread of the Gospel. Yet, many other indigenous ministries around the world are celebrated at missions festivals, conferences and large financially sponsored evangelistic meetings or television broadcasts.⁸

⁷ “Free Methodist First Nations Conversation 2007,” (Session Notes, Arlington Beach FM Camp, Saskatchewan, 2007), 5.

⁸ Brander McDonald, “A Cry for Equality at the Feast.” Paper received from Dan Sheffield.

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- The issue of “polarization of worldviews” also surfaces - Indigenous people are seen as ‘too Christian’ at home and ‘too native’ at church.
 - Note: the lack of acceptance of Indigenous cultures and worldviews is tied to the assumption that white dominant society is the standard. Unless we name this type of white supremacy and push against it, it will always be the standard by which things are measured and power is distributed.⁹ As Canadians, we need to wrestle with our understanding of ourselves and our history, and do so with deep humility, if there is even going to be true reconciliation.
2. Lack of support (financial and otherwise) for Indigenous Leaders
- *A Cry for Equality at the Feast*, Brander McDonald¹⁰
 - Most people do not recognize that native Indigenous Christian Leadership lives well below the poverty line. Thus, their tenure is short lived and their effectiveness withers for lack of funding and support. They usually return to their native environment feeling defeated and rejected by the non-native Indigenous Christian community given the lack of any real long-term support.
 - It appears in many cases that non-native Indigenous Christians would rather give funding to outside missions and other non-native missions at home rather than to truly indigenous native ministry. One reason is that non-native Indigenous Christians still hold to the premise of “contamination by association” with native people, especially the more typically “traditional” native people, for fear of their “pagan” ways.
 - Note: the lack of support (financial and otherwise) for Indigenous Leaders is again related to the assumption that white dominant society is the standard against which all other cultures and societies should be measured. There is a lack of cultural humility which can manifest itself through a lack of support for those who come from or practice a different culture. This is true despite the fact that many Indigenous cultures may be even *more* aligned with “Biblical understandings” of family, sacrifice, community, prayers, spirituality and the like.¹¹

Evangelism

A prominent issue seems to be that the story of Jesus Christ has been told, but the love of Jesus Christ has not been shared. Many missionaries have shared the “gospel” with Indigenous peoples, but it

⁹ See Regan, Paulette, *Unsettling the Settler Within* for further information regarding the depth of this problem.

¹⁰ See note 8 above.

¹¹ See Twiss, Richard, *Rescuing the Gospel From the Cowboys: A Native American Expression of Jesus Way*; see also Twiss, Richard, *One Church Many Tribes*



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seems that Indigenous peoples were not invited to be in *community* with other believers. Missionaries have shared the gospel because they believed Indigenous peoples needed to be saved, but it appears missionaries did not actually invite or welcome Indigenous peoples to be brothers and sisters in Christ.

Excerpts:

- 2007 First Nations Conversations (Notes)
 - We discussed the relationship between *Missio Dei* and *Missio Ecclesia*. Many First Nations people do not need evangelism (i.e., telling the Jesus story) because they already know it, but they do need to meet the God of Shalom, who desires to come among them and heal, renew and restore.¹²

- *A Cry for Equality at the Feast*, Brander McDonald¹³
 - A large proportion of non-native Indigenous Christians believe the work of evangelism and healing has already been accomplished with native Indigenous people in Canada. With the effects of evangelistic colonialism and also from government sponsored Indian Residential Schools run by denominations, most non-native Christians believe that native people have already been reached for Christ.

- *Light on the Horizon* by the North Canada Evangelical Mission (NCEM)
 - There was a spiritual decline in the generations following the work of the Methodist Missionaries in the 1800s because of what some missionaries with NCEM have called ‘a veneer’ of Christianity.
 - After the 1800s, ‘villages that had seen white men pass through seemed even more openly sinful’.
 - “[J]ust as the small dose of a virus effects [*sic*] a resistance to a physical disease, so it seems a tiny dose of Christianity would prevent individuals and groups from catching the real thing.”¹⁴

The Residential School System

It is difficult to find resources that speak to the FMCiC’s involvement in, view of, or stance on residential schools. Some sources mention the schools in passing. Some more recent sources mention

¹² “Free Methodist First Nations Conversation 2007”, 6.

¹³ See note 8 above.

¹⁴ Rollie Hodgman. *Light on the Horizon*. Northern Canada Evangelical Mission. Accessed December 1, 2023. https://ncem.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Light_on_the_Horizon.pdf, 193-194.

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the harm “the Church” caused to Indigenous peoples in the past. Though there is a recognition of harm done, there is a lack of information concerning the FMCiC’s role in particular.

Of note, Egerton Ryerson, infamous for being the architect of the Indian Residential School system, was a Methodist. Ryerson belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church, from which the Free Methodists had splintered off. How individual Free Methodist congregations and leaders supported (or opposed) the residential school system is unknown.

- *Light on the Horizon*, North Canada Evangelical Mission (NCEM)
 - “There was not much educational opportunity for those children who hadn’t left home to attend residential schools, so missionaries did what they could to help.”¹⁵
 - “Reports of abuse of Indian children in church-run residential schools have surfaced in recent years. Stories of forced separation from families, denial of the right to speak their Native languages, and other offenses too terrible to describe have been revealed. And while the newer evangelical denominations and mission agencies were not involved in operating these institutions, the result for some Native individuals has been a resentment to anything ‘Christian’”¹⁶

- FMCiC First Nations Sub-Team
 - In 2008, in the FMCiC First Nations Sub-Team adopted the following resolution: “BE IT RESOLVED that we hereby publicly confess a role in the historical oppression of our First Nations people, even if that role was only passive inaction”¹⁷

Conclusion

In sum, an unwillingness on the part of the FMCiC to fully engage with Indigenous cultures and worldviews, along with a lack of intentional and maintained funding, appear to be the biggest barriers to the historic and current lack of participation of Indigenous peoples in FMCiC membership and leadership. While not uniform in experience or history, the current and historical struggles of BIPOC peoples can be attributed to the imperialist dominations, structures, and desires of the past, which not only continue to linger with us today, but in some cases continue to be actively maintained. The Church, and specifically the FMCiC, has an opportunity to respond in ways that acknowledge and address the problems of the past as a means to create a more inclusive future.

¹⁵ Hodgman, 148.

¹⁶ Hodgman, 190.

¹⁷ Study Commission on Doctrine, “First Nations Sub-Team Resolution”, (Conference Resolution, FMCiC), 2008.

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Appendix III: Bramalea Free Methodist Church: A Case Study

Introduction to Bramalea Free Methodist Church

Bramalea Free Methodist Church (BFMC) was planted in 1982, growing from just a few believers to the medium-sized, multi-racial, multicultural, and intergenerational congregation it is at present. As numbers grew, members embarked on an ambitious plan to construct a sanctuary that reflected the hopes, aspirations, and faith of the worshippers. In the 1990s, BFMC moved to its current location on Howden Boulevard dedicated to the glory of God and offered a place of worship for residents in and around the Bramalea area. The early members were typically white, of Anglo descent, and led by pastors drawn mainly from the FMCiC.

Over the years, the church has continued to attract new attendees, including BIPOC newcomers. This trend signaled a significant and sustained shift in the ethnic composition of the church. Fractures and weaknesses within and among the membership affected church unity, especially in discussions regarding church policy and direction. Ultimately, this resulted in a major split in membership, with some deciding to leave BFMC.

However, BFMC survived this fracture, and continued to maintain a steadfast presence in which peoples of various backgrounds and races, united in hope, faith, and trust as one body in Jesus Christ, would worship God in the beauty of holiness, sharing their gifts and talents, and demonstrating the 'Fruit of the Spirit' as Paul the apostle enunciated in Galatians 5:22-23. The church grew from strength to strength, and by the early 2000's church attendance averaged about 80 congregants, exhibiting hallmarks of a healthy church with a lively worship and praise team, and pastoral leadership providing inspirational services and communal activities to celebrate the goodness of God.

Newly arrived immigrants, eager to associate with a church similar to the ones they left in their homelands, joined BFMC. The priorities of families with young children included settling down in their new homeland, securing jobs to support themselves, placing their kids in school, and so on. This left them little time for anything else, including aspiring for positions in the ministry of the church, pastoral or otherwise. Worse still, as the children grew older, most pursued higher education away from home, and showed no inclination to take up youth leadership roles in the church. The absence of people of colour in the clergy was strikingly obvious, not as a deliberate FMCiC racial policy decision, but as an outcome of the prevailing circumstances.

BFMC experienced a sequence of unanticipated events between 2002 and 2004, which affected church morale and sanctity. The then long-serving pastor left under a storm of dissensions, some members of the praise and worship team left for various reasons, and the mood in the church declined. For several years, BFMC had no dedicated pastor and depended on the service of supply pastors. Despite this difficulty and uncertainty about the future of the church, board members worked together, successfully managing the administration and day-to-day operations of the church. Meanwhile, the board actively sought to appoint a full-time pastor and revive the spirit of togetherness and devotion.

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This transitional period was fraught with difficulties and unexpected challenges. The pastoral search and appointment process was bogged down with disagreements and delays in the choice of a pastor. Eventually, two pastors were appointed for a term of five years and seven years respectively.

However, over this time, the church witnessed a further decline in attendance and currently has an average of 40 congregants during normal Sunday services. Notably, only one BIPOC candidate came up for consideration. Unfortunately, there were no Black pastoral candidates at the BFMC.

During the last two decades or so, the BFMC has been undergoing significant changes in the mode of worship, racial composition, and age groups. Church unity and membership have been declining due to internal squabbling and factions breaking away. As lead pastors have come and gone, placing the church in constant transition, most young members have left for various reasons. The form of worship has remained largely traditional with old hymns and choruses. The membership has become mainly elderly people of colour. Like other churches, the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic reduced in-person congregational services and attendance as pandemic protocols moved members to Zoom worship. As the strict protocols have been gradually relaxed, members are slowly returning to in-person worship.

BFMC: A Survey in Two Parts

The following is a compilation of the recollections and perspectives by members of the BFMC. This is divided into two parts:

The first is a summary of responses to a one-sentence, open-ended, opinion survey question that was sent to 22 BFMC attendees. Respondents were expected to share any related experience and perspectives from their Canadian or other background. It was noted that their input would be useful as the research was conducted and analysed and subsequently, the research outcomes would be useful to inform the formulation, development, and implementation of future church policy. Seven responses (31.8%) were received. One respondent inquired whether confidentiality was involved in this survey request, and that was confirmed. The responses were very varied, candid, and interesting.

The second part uses the framework developed by the history sub-committee to ensure a consistent and uniform approach. In this regard, the responders were asked some specific questions, adapted for the BFMC context as follows:

- Barriers - What barriers have you faced as a visible minority with regards to becoming part of the membership/leadership in the FMCiC? Have you considered seeking a leadership position at BFMC or in the FMCiC? If no, why not? Evangelism - What is your experience with the church outreach ministry at BFMC?
- Oppression - Did you have to forgo parts of your culture or heritage to feel welcome in the church?
- Connecting the dots - To what extent have the FMCiC in general, and the BFMC in particular contributed to shaping and strengthening your Christian walk, and deepening your trust in, and faith with God?

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Part One: Racial Discrimination in Canada?

22 members of BFMC were sent the following one-sentence, open-ended, opinion survey question: “Describe your experience if any, and/or perspectives generally, in your home country or in Canada on the subject of Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity in the FMCiC”. We received 7 responses. Below, the responses received from 5 of the respondents are summarized to avoid repetition and maintain anonymity.

Respondent 1:

Respondent 1 viewed the impact of racial discrimination or systemic racism from three different angles: in the workplace, as a consumer, and in the church. Emigrating to Canada in the mid 1970s, Respondent 1 never thought about or encountered racism in their country of origin. Respondent 1 stated that, once in Canada, over the years conditions “opened my eyes tremendously to the fact that all people are not treated equally on all levels within our current society.”

Respondent 1 recalled that their first encounter of racial discrimination was at their place of employment. This experience left Respondent 1 feeling that “people of colour were only looked upon to do the mundane repetitive everyday task or mandate” of the organisation. Very few options for professional development and opportunities for advancement were available for which they could apply. Respondent 1 noted that back then, a person’s ability to get beyond the position they were hired for was in the hands of their reporting manager. However, over the years, changes to the culture within this organization changed as more and more people of colour were employed and federal and provincial guidelines around employment equity were enacted.

Outside of the workplace, Respondent 1 noted that racism was subtle: from “the store clerk following you around to make sure you were not stealing the merchandise, or at the checkout counter where they will assume that a white customer was there before you and will move to assist them first.” Respondent 1 always made sure to correct such behaviour by speaking up: “you should be asking who was here first in line, not making assumptions the other person was there first.

Another area where Respondent 1 observed racial biases was related to BIPOC children born in Canada not being looked upon as Canadians. Instead, these children were always being asked “where are you from?” Respondent 1’s children would reply “I am Canadian, I was born here.” Respondent 1 felt that “kids of colour born in this country from parents who are not Canadian by birth were not looked upon as belonging here, and they surely cannot make claim to the countries of their parents.”

Regrettably, racism at times also reared its ugly head even within the church. Respondent 1 noted that when they started attending BFMC it was a predominantly white church with few minorities in attendance. As the demographics of Brampton shifted to include peoples of West Indian/Caribbean background, the culture shift in the church likewise began. Many immigrants from the Caribbean have a strong connection to Methodism and therefore were drawn to BFMC. The sense was that once Caribbean people started coming and connecting with the church, the white congregants began moving on to other churches within Brampton that had more white people. Respondent 1 reflected,

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“why [is it that] even today, people of God who are called to love everyone, could not have learned to embody all cultural differences and be enriched by our differences?”

Respondent 1 deplored the state of the current educational and judicial systems that continue to disenfranchise children and young adults of colour, streamlining them into educational programs that will not prepare them for the changing technological era of the future. Respondent 1 noted that the criminal justice system has a disproportionate number of young men of colour behind bars due to certain inequalities which have led them towards a life of crime in order to survive in a society which is stacked against them. Respondent 1 observed a wide gap between children of colour and white children taken into the care of the Children's Aid Society. In addition, Respondent 1 noted that more children of colour are referred to Social Services by the schools and neighbours, largely because of cultural insensitivity on the part of the school system. Respondent 1 concluded by saying, “there is a lot of work to be done to correct the inequalities that currently exist, which must begin at the school level...”

Respondent 2:

Respondent 2 narrated their experience in three churches where they had ministered: a French-speaking church in Québec, and two English speaking churches in Ontario. Respondent 2 discussed their experiences as follows:

Relations with FMCiC English: After the Rosemont (Haitian) Church was established in Montreal, Respondent 1 was eager to have a delegation attend the annual conference in Ontario. In the mid-1970s a delegation of the Rosemont Church attended the FMC annual conference for East Ontario, which included Québec churches. It was important to show the English, and mainly white, supporters some of the fruits of their labor. However, Respondent 2 was criticized by some who were disappointed that the delegation was black, as opposed to white “Québécois”. Respondent 2 pointed out that the church had sent them to Africa to minister to “black” people. However, they noted that when they were sent to Québec, they were not told the colour of people to whom they should minister. Notably, Respondent 2 stated: “In those days it was uncommon to see many people of colour in our annual conference, as our churches were very ‘white’. Fortunately, over time in the ensuing years, with considerable immigration to Canada from Africa, Asia, etc. the FMCiC today has a wide diversity of ethnic groups represented and today our denomination in Canada welcomes people from many nations, languages, and cultures.”

Québec Culture: Respondent 2 pointed out that in general, Haitians and other people of colour who come to Québec face a society which has displayed considerable discrimination against those who are not (what they consider to be) true white “Québécois”, with ancestry from Europe, notably, France. The English minority in Québec have faced considerable challenges regarding language.

Grace Methodist Church, Mississauga relations between two different non-white communities: Asian and Caribbean/African communities make up the majority of the congregation at Grace Methodist Church. However, the Asian group regarded the Caribbean/African group as less than equal, though some of the leaders came from both groups. Respondent 2 cited an example when

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a black family, well known in the congregation, had a death in the family. While a large group of black people attended the memorial service there was little if any representation from the Asian segment of the congregation. Eventually, an African person became an assistant pastor and, according to Respondent 2, “his ministry was a blessing to many”.

Respondent 2 acknowledged that there have been some anti-white sentiments among people whose ancestors suffered greatly under colonial rule in Africa, the Caribbean, and elsewhere. The historic oppression of Black people conditioned their outlook on their current relationship with the white members of the congregation. This demonstrates that colonial policy has lasting impacts on members of the church.

Overall, Respondent 2’s family has been treated with respect by most in the BFMC ministry, though for some years they did not feel fully accepted on the friendship level by the Caribbean people. Respondent 2 noted that when one of their family members married a person of Indian descent, “someone from the dominant group said ‘now you are one of us’ as we accepted an Asian man into our family. We felt a greater acceptance.” Whilst marriage strengthened their bond in the case of Respondent 2’s family member, another family, concerned that one of their children might develop a relationship with a young person of different ethnic background, decided to leave the congregation. This family moved to a congregation that was predominantly white.

Respondent 3:

Regarding racism, Respondent 3 had a more upbeat response. Apart from a single incident of racism experienced, this respondent had no negative racially motivated experiences. Respondent 3 asserted, “whatever race Jesus was or is, does not really matter. The important thing is that we accept the name of Jesus as the Son of God; and as our Lord and Saviour.” Therefore, Respondent 3 is of the view that to avoid feelings and perceptions of cultural indifference, we should avoid painting and hanging artifactual images of Jesus in and around the churches. Instead, we should leave the image(s) of Jesus up to our spiritual imagination and/or feelings guided by scriptural interpretation from the Bible.

Respondent 4:

Like Respondent 3, Respondent 4 never experienced or observed instances of racial injustice or inequities in our local BFMC, or at any Methodist church he had visited. Respondent 4 added that “this is not to suggest that there may or may not have been the existence of any problem.”

Respondent 4 noted that the subject of racial injustice and inequalities could result in a “brush” that paints too wide and risks an unfair assessment of the principles or ethics of the Free Methodist Church in Canada. Nonetheless, at a minimum, Respondent 4 was of the view that an assessment may be possible if the “observations” and/or “experiences” were recorded in all the churches in the denomination. On this basis, one could conclude that perhaps a problem exists which the church should address immediately.

Respondent 4 believed that in some churches, people probably expressed “hierarchical behaviours” in ways that “turn off” others because they create social barriers and levels of social status

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to elevate themselves up the social ladder. Respondent 4 concluded that this is the "systemic nature" of human beings. However, in Respondent 4's view, such a situation can be mitigated if there is diversity in membership, church board, pastors, and regular messaging of the importance of relationships.

Respondent 5:

Respondent 5 did not think they had anything to offer, having not experienced any racial problems or encounters in the FMCiC in their recollection. On the contrary, when Respondent 5 started at BFMC, one elderly white lady was the most welcoming and continually friendly individual. In Respondent 5's interactions throughout the church locally and at the national level, they had never experienced any such problem.

Respondent 5 believed that, on the one hand, one's [positive] attitude or demeanor sometimes discouraged the advancement of these problems or issues towards oneself. On the other hand, Respondent 5 noted that if encountering someone with deep seated racial tendencies, even one's attitude or demeanor might not help.

Respondent 5 suggested that history, open dialogue, and conversation where hearts are open are necessary, even where there have not been problems, in order to provide an understanding of racial experiences. Respondent 5 alluded to an unrelated incident, noting that the killing of George Floyd in the US highlighted the racial experience and racial divide and prejudices between the races. Respondent 5 found that though that was an extreme situation, it shed light on the lived experience of racial problems. Respondent 5 concluded by saying, "I have experienced racism, but not in the church. By and large, we have been fortunate at BFMC."

Part 2: Opinion Survey

Part two of the survey was conducted after a Sunday worship service. Congregants were informed about the survey and a copy of the questions was emailed to the congregants in advance. The responses were insightful and provided data regarding the varying experiences of the respondents.

All those interviewed indicated that they did not encounter any barriers with regards to becoming a part of the membership/leadership in the FMCiC. Moreover, and generally speaking, the respondents indicated that they did not have to forgo or change part of their cultural heritage to feel welcome in the church. In fact, the respondents noted that the church leadership and members encouraged cultural diversity and worship, which demonstrated that though many, we represent one body in Christ. A respondent provided an example, namely that the Krio Diaspora United of Southern Ontario (KDUSO) was invited to conduct worship services at BFMC for two consecutive years. The KDUSO members were warmly received, and their form of worship resonated with most of the BFMC members. [The Krios are descendants of Africans who were enslaved and taken into captivity across the Atlantic Ocean to America and the Caribbean islands, and later repatriated to Freetown, Sierra Leone after the abolishment of inhumane human trafficking.]

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Without exception, the respondents stated they were neither pressured to adopt the prevailing view nor felt guilty into becoming Christians. As they continued with their walk with God, they were getting better at understanding more about God, which would strengthen their commitment as believers, and their faith and trust in God.

When asked whether they had considered seeking a leadership position at the BFMC or in the FMCiC, and if not, why not, the responses were mixed. Some of the respondents actually hold or have held positions in the Official Board, the Praise and Worship Team, or other ministry teams. Others said that given multiple commitments outside the church, or their level of spiritual experience, they hesitated to take on such a responsibility. When asked about their experience with the church's outreach ministry, fewer than half of the respondents indicated that they had no experience. Those who are involved demonstrated a strong support for the ongoing programs with neighbourhood schools, local community organizations, distribution of Christmas hampers to the needy, and working with young single mothers. Respondents reacted favourably to the question about the extent to which both the FMCiC generally and the BFMC in particular have contributed to shaping and strengthening their Christian walk and deepening their trust and faith in God. They expressed that they benefited tremendously from the sermons preached and found the godly message very good and helpful in many ways. They felt the love of God through the members, and the shared fellowship helped them to grow more like Jesus Christ and helped them to become stronger in their faith and trust in God. The respondents stated they are encouraged through prayers and the willingness of the church to keep in touch and to offer help whenever necessary. The church provided a place to hear God's word with fellow believers, learn more about the gospel, Christ's ministry, and the goodness of God as our Heavenly Father through Bible study, discussions, and prayerful devotion.

Conclusion

Stories told by BFMC worshippers reflect resilience and faith. Though the respondents may have experienced forms of racism that were subtle and not overtly obvious, they did not focus on issues of systemic racism or racial injustice and expressed having a good experience at BFMC. Various ministry opportunities were available for people aspiring to serve in different capacities, and some members filled those positions. Members served in the BFMC Official Board, Praise and Worship Team, Outreach, Men's/Women's ministries, Building and Maintenance ministries, MEGaP etc. Members willingly cooperate to carry out different activities and functions to maintain the smooth operation of the church. The atmosphere is warm and friendly, which fosters partnerships and collaborations among teams.

The subject of racial justice and ethnic equity is complex and sensitive. Therefore, necessary and appropriate measures should be put in place which address underlying racial and systemic issues, to engender collaboration and positive attitudes in the future.

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Appendix IV: Québec Story

**All the explanations about the purpose of the project within the FMC movement, meaning of the name of the committee, team members, duration of the interview has been discussed but not recorded. Speaker 1 is referred as Interviewer and Speaker 2 as Interviewee. The time stamps are not shown for translation purposes.*

Interviewer: Hello and thank you for accepting to participate in this project with the RJEE TF task force. If at any time you need to take a break or stop the interview you can let me know. How are you doing today?

Interviewee: I am well with the grace of our Lord and Savior, Jesus-Christ. Thank you. And you?

Interviewer: I am well, thank you. The first question I have for you is what is your spiritual journey? How did you come to faith in Jesus? Is it because of your parents, friends, outside influences, an event that changed your life? I guess it is more than one question.

Interviewee: Yes. I was born into a Christian family. In God's Word. I was born into the gospel. I grew up in it. I've never been outside. It's my spiritual journey.

Interviewer: Have you always been a Christian?

Interviewee: I gave my life to Christ at a young age. It's who I've always been.

Interviewer: When do you say you were born into it...Can you give me some details?

Interviewee: About my parents, my family?

Interviewer: Yes, that's right.

Interviewee: Both of my parents were Christians.

Interviewer: Did they influence you? I mean, did you feel they didn't give you any other choice?

Interviewee: I simply followed in my parents' footsteps. Then at the age of twelve, I was baptized.

Interviewer: Are the other people in your family, your brothers, and sisters, also Christians and went to church?

Interviewee: Everyone. All my family members were baptized and went to church. Until today.

Interviewer: Ok, thank you for sharing a snapshot of your spiritual journey as a young child. If we talk about the Free Methodist Church now. What is your current role in the Free Methodist Church of Canada?

Interviewee: I am what the mission calls a retired pastor of the Free Methodist Church of Canada. But as a pastor you never retire, in my opinion. So, I'm retired from the church where I was the senior/lead pastor.

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Interviewer: Do you do other things? Are you participating in other ways, even during your retirement? And if so, how? What is your contribution to the Free Methodist Church right now?

Interviewee: How? What contribution? If I work in the Free Methodist Church?

Interviewer: No, it doesn't have to be a job. For example, do you help sometimes? Do you participate in any activities?

Interviewee: Yes, I help and participate in activities.

Interviewer: Can you please give me some examples?

Interviewee: For example, during the height of the pandemic, the church was mostly remote, on Zoom, so there have been changes in the type of participation. The remote church was a new challenge.

Interviewer: How did you participate before and during the pandemic?

Interviewee: Well, apart from attending worship, I preached several times, offered mentorship, counselling, participated in activities like doing the Lord's Supper and Prayer, blessing and more.

Interviewer: Merci. And how long have you been involved with the Free Methodist Church of Canada?

Interviewee: As a Pastor...several years... Not to mention the years when I studied theology and education.

Interviewer: Then I will specify how many years you have been a member of the Free Methodist Church of Canada, and that you participate as a Pastor?

Interviewee: Since I've been in Canada. That's how I got involved in the Free Methodist Church of Canada.

Interviewee: I studied at Wesleyan Seminary. When I arrived here in Canada, I always kept my faith, and my Methodist principles. I was approached for a plan to plant a Free Methodist church in Montreal. I was recommended to the Free Methodist Church of Canada to become a ministerial candidate and eventually become an ordained pastor within the Free Methodist Church of Canada.

Interviewer: Thank you. It's really interesting. And then when you say, since before you arrived in Canada, you had studied at the College. Tell me a little about this period in your life. What led you to study at that college?

Interviewee: Oh okay. I was interested in studying at a college level. I was young, but I had all my requirements to apply to a college.

Interviewer: And this interest led you to study at this College? The Wesleyan College and Seminary?

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Interviewee: No, no, it's because I had a friend studying there, and then I went to visit him. And from there, I met Pastor Kenny from the Free Methodist Church in Canada. He approached me and told me about the program. And then he asked me questions. Like if I wanted to study. I was surprised because I didn't even know him. Then that's when he invited me to bring my transcripts, diplomas in order to study at the College. That's where it all started.

Interviewer: After that, when you arrived in Canada, you started with the Free Methodist Church?

Interviewee: Oh! There was no Free Methodist church in Montreal. Yes, there was a Free Methodist Church in the province of Québec, but not in Montreal... English-speaking. I didn't even know it at that time. This is the church in Clarenceville. The church in Montreal was planted after a missionary church planter and pastor at Clarenceville, went to Haiti.

Interviewee: And he came back here with the names of all the students, all the people who studied in Haiti. And he met us one by one. It was from there that the Free Methodist Church in Montreal began. A francophone Free Methodist Church.

Interviewer: Ok. So yes. If I understand correctly, this is the path of the creation of the Methodist Church in Montreal. Were you the first visible minority Free Methodist church in Québec?

Interviewee: We were indeed the first Haitian Free Methodist church in Québec.

Interviewer: Wow! It is quite an accomplishment. Have other churches been planted in Québec after?

Interviewee: I think there were attempts, but they didn't work. And then there was another white francophone church that functioned and is still there today, the Church of St-Henri.

Interviewer: Ok. So, is [the Anglophone church planter and pastor] one of the people who helped and guided you?

Interviewee: Yes, it was with him that we planted the church. Because he was the one who came to help us start the Church with two pastors.

Interviewer: Did someone come from time to time to provide you leadership training?

Interviewee: Well, yes, it was [the Anglophone church planter and pastor], who came to meet with the team. Because I asked him, he came. I think he came at least once a month, or sometimes even more.

Interviewer: For how long?

Interviewee: For several years. But at some point, it was not every month. It was when needed, when official gatherings or just to visit.

Interviewee: After that, he was not coming to Montreal anymore.

Interviewer: And why was that?

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Interviewee: Because he was a missionary in Africa for a while.

Interviewer: Okay, I understand. After that, were there other people who have helped you on your path to leadership?

Interviewee: Yes, the Free Methodist Church of Canada continued to be present.

Interviewer: Who were these people? What did they actually do to help you?

Interviewee: Before, we had superintendents in the Free Methodist Church of Canada. It is similar to what the directors of church health and church planting are doing now. They oversee the churches in Québec. They were responsible for Québec. I can't say how many times a year he came. Whatever amount it was, he was often in Québec with us. He gave us training and support.

Interviewer: So, there was help for the churches in Québec...?

Interviewee: The church received support from the Free Methodist Church in Canada.

Interviewer: In terms of support, did you receive money? Was money sometimes an obstacle in your leadership role within the Methodist Church of Canada?

Interviewee: Well, yes, sometimes it was hard. But we made it through so many obstacles. And yes, the Free Methodist Church of Canada has helped in terms of money.

Interviewer: Okay. How?

Interviewee: When the church wanted to buy a property, the Free Methodist church helped us with the money we already had as well.

Interviewer: Did you receive a salary and pension from the church as a lead pastor?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: How did you survive financially?

Interviewee: I had a full-time job to care for my family, and I was a full-time pastor.

Interviewer: This is a lot of work. Were there things or circumstances that were difficult or hindered your path, in your journey within the Methodist Church of Canada?

Interviewee: No, no, not at all. At least in my opinion, there was no hindrance. It is true that I had to work a lot. But the Free Methodist Church of Canada was well liked and regarded in the beginning.

Interviewer: As a church, as the first Haitian church in Québec, did you feel well regarded?

Interviewee: Yes.

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Interviewer: Haitian and francophone on top of that! Did you ever feel like you were not taken into account, in some instances, because you're a Haitian church with a Haitian lead pastor, and plus most of the congregation didn't speak English?

Interviewee: No. Not for my part, No.

Interviewer: OK. Now, if we move on to another topic, how did you and your church do evangelization? How did evangelization work?

Interviewee: We had several tactics. We had a program and a coordinator for it, objectives that the church had established, but it was also the responsibility of each person. It is something that I taught at the church...no amount of programs can reach people near and close to you.

Interviewer: That's a good philosophy.

Interviewer: What would you say were the obstacles to evangelization? As you have mentioned, there are things that have worked well, and there are things that have not worked so well. Do you have any examples? What has not worked and what has worked well?

Interviewee: In short, the obstacles are in the cultural differences. Although we have been able to evangelize to multiple people over the years, it was a challenge for some people of the church to reach out to white people. Some were not nice when approached by a non-white person, and on top of that to talk about God.

Interviewer: I can understand that. Being from Montreal, I have and still face the harmful effects of racial discrimination.

Interviewee: Yes, it is not easy. But God gives us the strength to go through these hardships. Also, the Free Methodist Church in Québec was not known. When we talked about Free Methodists, people didn't even know what Free Methodists were. It added another layer of difficulty when evangelizing.

Interviewer: That is a good point.

Interviewee: That was an obstacle.

Interviewer: So, the fact that there was no visibility of the Methodist church in Québec meant people did not know about the movement. It is not the church as such that they didn't know, but the denomination.

Interviewee: Exactly. That's right.

Interviewer: Then what have been the successes? Because you mentioned earlier that the churches in Québec had developed well at a certain point. Are there things in evangelism that have helped?

Interviewee: Yes, with the organization of activities, conferences that we had done in the church. I know many pastors in Québec in other denominations, I would invite them to the church with their

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congregations and they would invite me as well to preach at their church and participate in activities. So, I created in a sense an interdenominational community, and we did activities together. This has allowed that with all the activities that we have done at the church, it has given the Free Methodist church in Québec a good visibility. So, the church was well known.

Interviewer: So, through these activities of evangelization of your churches, it has been possible for the denomination to be known in Québec. Do you think it helped reach the white francophone population of Québec?

Interviewee: Yes, it helped, and there were several church plants. Even in Granby [another city in the province of Québec, predominantly white], there was a church that opened. It was a great joy. But unfortunately, there were crises in some of these new churches. For example, one of the church plants was doing well, but the pastor left, and thereafter, there was no other pastor to replace.

Interviewer: Mmmmm. I understand. What was the major reason for the crisis?

Interviewee: I do not know if it is the financial means that was the primary factor. But the financial means were a big piece.

Interviewee: At a certain moment, there were several white francophone churches.

Interviewer: So, the church was evangelizing to white francophone people in Québec?

Interviewee: Yes. There was enough momentum at that period.

Interviewer: These are white churches, white Québécois?

Interviewee: So, to be clear, at that time, we were the only Haitian Free Methodist church in Québec. All the subsequent churches after us were white francophone. And then they all closed, except for Clarenceville, and then after a few more Haitian churches were planted.

Interviewer: It's only Clarenceville still today...There are now also churches led by pastors who came from different countries in Africa.

Interviewer: Last question, do you consider the Free Methodist Church of Canada has reached the black population of Québec? If so, tell us about how they succeeded.

Interviewee: It was a lot through networking between our churches and other people that started to be interested in what the FMC was offering, as a support to help pastors, church planters plant a church. People talked and shared information in our communities.

Interviewer: This is a great way to get the information out.

This concludes our interview. I want to thank you for your time and sharing part of your story and history of the FMC in Québec. Thank you for trusting us with this information. This information will stay anonymous and be used to draw some themes and will not be distributed and read by

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people outside the committee. They will not discuss the verbatim outside the discussions for analysis.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: Thank you for your ministry and all the work you have done in the development of the Free Methodist movement in Québec, but also in Canada. You were one of the pioneers of what it means to be a bi-vocational pastor, and you were and are still to today a support and presence of the visible minority population. You have worked hard to make the Methodist Church of Canada known in Québec, and you have also built a bridge with other denominations and cultures. Thank you, and may God continue to bless you and your family.

Interviewee: Thank you, and God bless you, and may He guide you and your team with His infinite wisdom.

Submitted by: The Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force

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Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force

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Appendix V: Definition of Terms for the Diversity and Inclusion Survey

Racism: The Ontario Human Rights Commission defines racism as an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes and slurs or hate crimes, but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these are unconsciously held and have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time. Racism operates at a number of levels, in particular, individual, systemic and societal.

Systemic Barriers: societal structures (i.e. institutions, laws, policies, procedures, norms, etc.) that are arranged to support the dominant racial/ethnic/cultural group either consciously or unconsciously and in turn, marginalizes the non-dominant racial/ethnic/cultural groups.

BIPOC: an acronym referring to Black, Indigenous and other People of Colour

Diversity & Inclusion: *Diversity* in our context refers to the mix of people that make up our movement, from, among other things, different ethnicities, languages, cultural backgrounds, geographies, ages, physical abilities and disabilities, and genders. *Inclusion* refers to an organizational environment in which everyone is treated fairly and respectfully, has equal access to opportunities and resources, and contributes fully to the movement's purpose. Think of it this way, "Diversity is the mix. Inclusion is making the mix work."

Organizational Leaders: Our movement's national leadership and decision-makers (i.e. BoA, Bishop, SCOD, MEGaP, Network Mentors, National Committee members, etc.)

National Leadership Team: The National Leadership Team (NLT) is comprised of The Bishop, The Director of Leadership Development & Church Health, The Director of Administrative Services and The Director of Church Planting.

Members of Conference: Ministerial members are all ordained and commissioned ministers (including retired ministers), ministerial candidates, and appointed supply pastors. Lay members are the elected delegates from local societies to Conference.

Members of a Committee: Elected clergy or lay members of a national committee.

Members: Individuals approved for membership in a local FMC in Canada, including Located Ministers.

Affinity Groups: Sometimes called inclusion networks, people networks or resource groups -- are formed around a shared interest, experience, demographic, or goal primarily to support those underrepresented in our denomination. (For example: Toronto Intercultural Network, Church Planting Network, Tyndale Student Ministry Group)

Intercultural Competency Training: May include assessment, courses, and/or coaching to facilitate personal growth and insight and collective change in ways that improve people's

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intercultural competence and their efforts at bridging cultural differences so that relationships are strengthened and the unity of the church is enhanced.

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Appendix VI: Diversity and Inclusion Survey

Fieldwork Strategies

As indicated above, this survey was sent out to gather the outlook and general thoughts of the General Conference. A quantitative study, this is by no means meant to be comprehensive, but a snapshot into the health of the denomination. Given our mandate to discover the general outlook of the General Conference regarding diversity and inclusion, we set the questions below for the survey.

1. What is your current relationship with the FMCiC?
 - a. Ordained Minister
 - b. Commissioned Minister
 - c. Lay Minister
 - d. Local Church Delegate
 - e. Currently or previously a member of a National Committee

(includes: BoA, Nominating, MEGaP, SCOD, Other (national taskforce, study team, Network Mentor/Leader))

2. The following descriptors represent aspects of my ethnic, language, and cultural background (select ALL that apply):
 - a. BIPOC
 - b. European
 - c. English is my primary language
 - d. French is my primary language
 - e. A language other than English or French is my primary language
 - f. Canada is my country of birth
 - g. A country other than Canada is my country of birth

3. Thinking about the strategy and goals of the FMCiC as an organization, select the answer that most closely applies. Do you feel that the FMCiC demonstrates and communicates the value of Diversity and Inclusion (select one):
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree

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- c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
4. Considering the initiatives in place within the FMCiC, select the answer(s) that most closely apply. The FMCiC has policy and procedure (including training and education) in place to actively support diversity and inclusion in our movement (select one):
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
5. Thinking about the members of General Conference experience within the FMCiC, select the answer that most closely applies. Members of Conference demonstrate a commitment to creating racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion in our national leadership groups (NLT, SCOD, BoA, etc.) (select one):
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
6. Members of Conference visibly correspond to the racial and ethnic diversity of the Canadian population (select one):
- a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

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7. Members of conference correspond to the diversity found *within* our Free Methodist churches (select one):
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

8. Being BIPOC is a barrier to serving on a national leadership role (e.g., BoA, MEGaP, SCOD, etc.) within the FMCiC (select one):
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

9. Do you have or know of a compelling narrative/story around the FMCiC's diversity and inclusion story (select one):
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree

10. Have you experienced or witnessed a situation of racism in interpersonal interactions at the organizational/national level within the FMCiC (select one):
 - a. Strongly Agree
 - b. Agree

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- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

11. Thinking about your own personal perspective and life experiences: The climate of racism in Canada includes organizational cultures, policies, practices, or procedures that exclude, displace, or marginalize some racialized groups or individuals (select one):

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

12. Some or all of the following are best practices that the FMCiC should adopt in order to advance our national/organizational racial justice efforts; awareness and education campaigns, intercultural competency training, and a foundational intercultural competency course.

- a. Strongly Agree
- b. Agree
- c. Neutral
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly Disagree

Along with these questions, there was a definition of terms sent out in the survey (Appendix IV). The survey itself was anonymized and sent over Listserv. Respondents had the choice of whether to respond and had the option of not filling out the survey in its entirety or at all. No one is identifiable through this process of data collection.

Data Analysis

As referenced previously, the respondents here were from across the denomination and members of General Conference. The survey was sent through the Pastors' Listserv, and each response that came

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in was anonymous. In total, there were 81 respondents. Respondents were invited to share their demographic information. As the differences between the categories of Overall and European, English, Canadian born respondents were negligible, these groups were taken together as a single group and classified under Overall. BIPOC and Other First Language groups were also taken together and classified as BIPOC+. National Leaders remained its own group.

Regarding role in the denomination: 89 per cent identified as Ordained Ministers; 2 per cent identified as Commissioned Ministers; 5 per cent identified as Lay Ministers; 5 per cent identified as Local Church Delegates; 25 per cent identified as either current or previously a member of a National Committee, which includes the BoA, Nominating, MEGaP, SCOD, or Other (national taskforce, study team, network mentor/leader).

Regarding ethnicity, language, and cultural background: 33 per cent *did not* indicate ethnicity. Seven per cent (7%) identified as BIPOC, and 59 per cent identified as having a European background or heritage. Language-wise: 93 per cent identified English as their primary language; 0 per cent as French; and 4 per cent as language other than English and French as primary language. Regarding country of birth: 79 per cent respondents were born in Canada, while 14 per cent were born in a country other than Canada.

Following are the results from the remaining questions in the survey. Going through each question one by one, we list first the question, the breakdown of results, and reflections on each point of data represented.

Submitted by: The Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force

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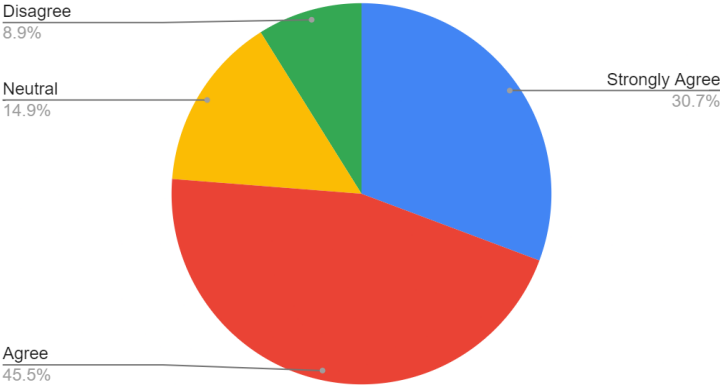
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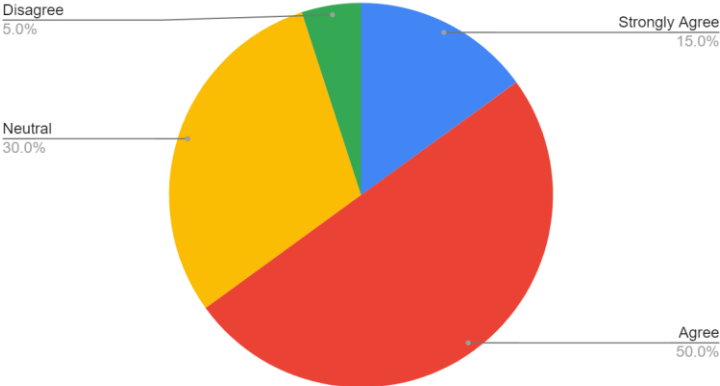
Thinking about the strategy and goals of the FMCiC as an organization, select the answer that most closely applies:

3. Do you feel that the FMCiC demonstrates and communicates the value of Diversity and Inclusion (selected one):

Overall



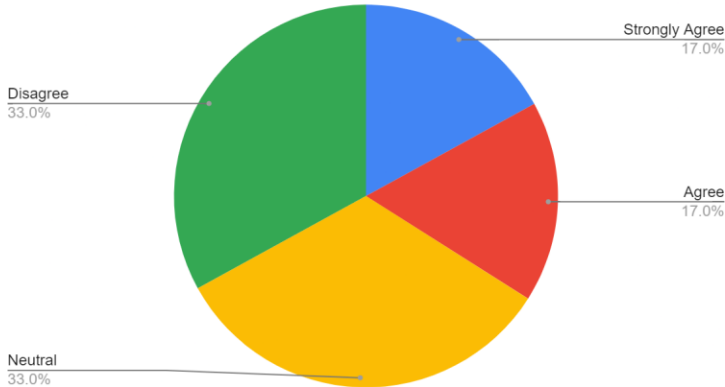
Leaders



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BIPOC+



	Overall	Leaders	BIPOC +
Strongly Agree	31%	15%	17%
Agree	46%	50%	17%
Neutral	15%	30%	33%
Disagree	9%	5%	33%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%

Seventy-seven per cent Overall and 65 per cent of Leaders agree (Strongly Agree and Agree) that the denomination demonstrates and communicates the values of diversity and inclusion. In contrast, 34 per cent of BIPOC agree (Strongly Agree and Agree). Nine per cent of Overall disagree, and likewise, 5 per cent of Leaders disagree. Thirty-three per cent of BIPOC+ disagree.

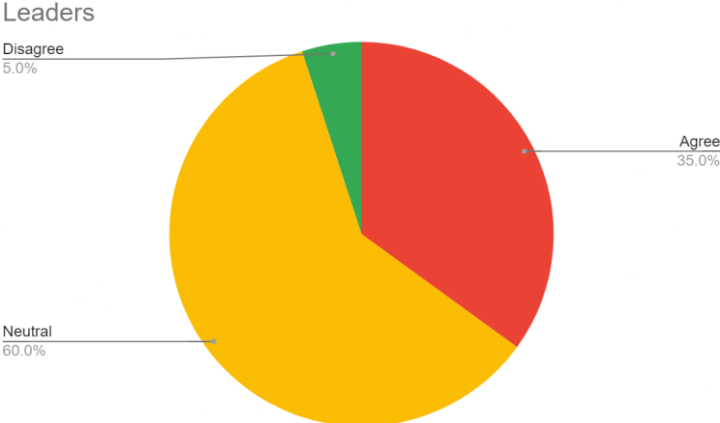
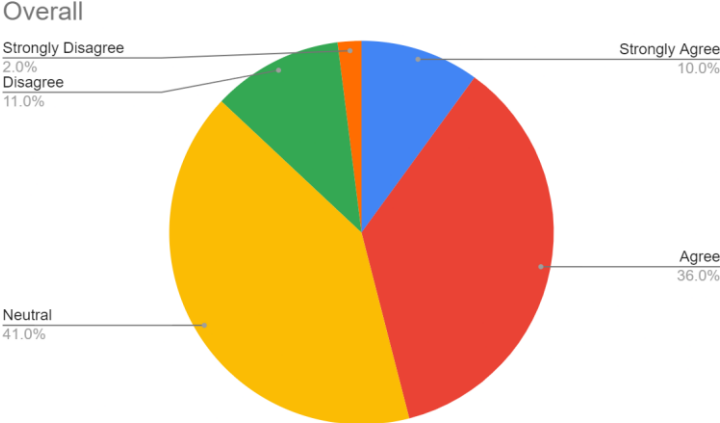


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Consider the initiatives in place within the FMCiC, select the answer(s) that most closely applies(apply):

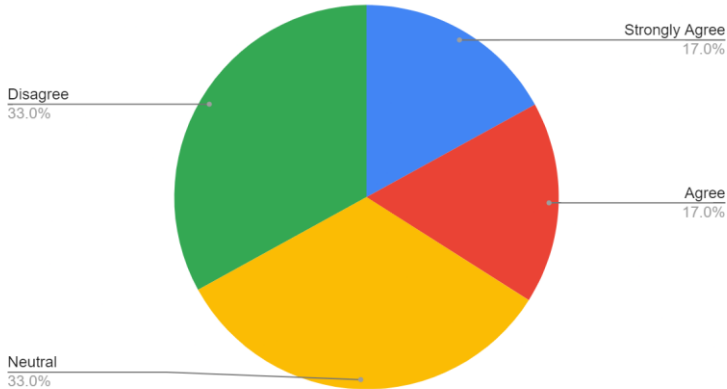
4. The FMCiC has policy and procedure (including training and education) in place to actively support diversity and inclusion in our movement (selected one):



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BIPOC+



	Overall	Leaders	BIPOC +
Strongly Agree	10%	0%	17%
Agree	36%	35%	17%
Neutral	41%	60%	33%
Disagree	11%	5%	33%
Strongly Disagree	2%	0%	0%

Notably, no group has a majority of respondents in agreement that the FMCiC has policies and procedures in place to actively support diversity and inclusion.

Sixty per cent of Leaders neither agree nor disagree that the denomination has policies and procedures in place to actively support diversity and inclusion, which is almost twice as many as BIPOC respondents. In contrast to 13 per cent Overall (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) and 5 per cent Leaders who disagreed there were policies and procedures in place to support diversity and inclusion, 33 per cent BIPOC+ disagree that there are such policies and procedures in place.

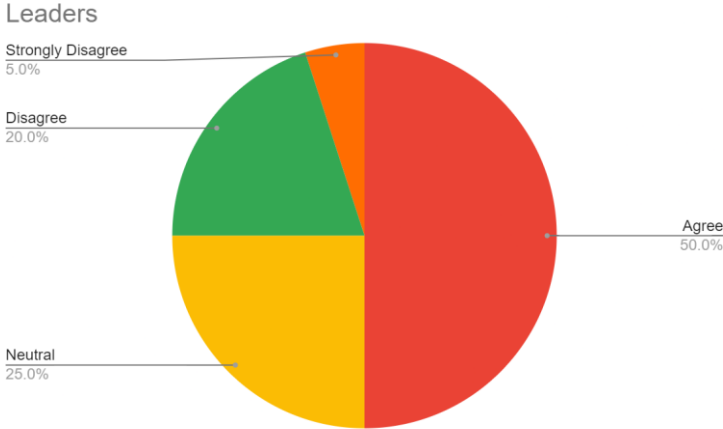
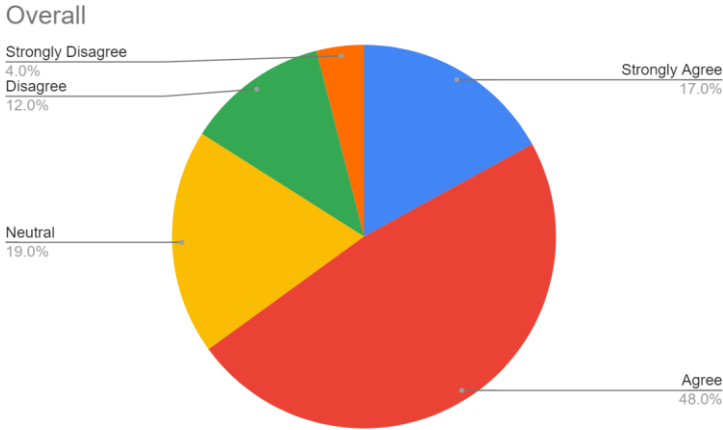


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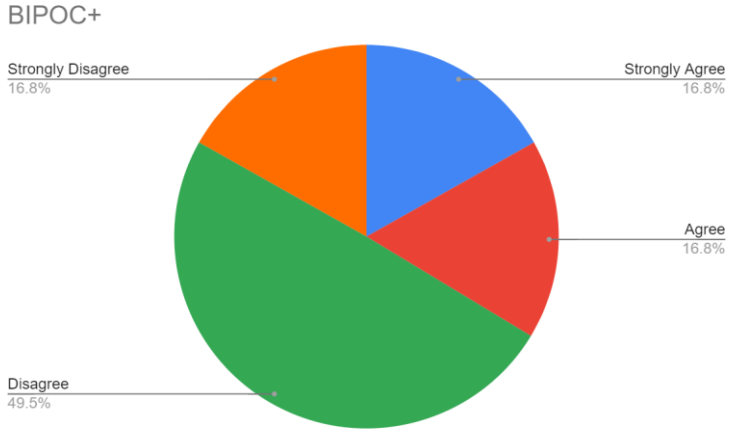
Thinking about the member of general conference experience within the FMCiC, select the answer that most closely applies:

5. Members of conference demonstrate a commitment to creating racial & ethnic diversity and inclusion in our national leadership groups (NLT, SCOD, BoA, etc.) (selected one):



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	Overall	Leaders	BIPOC +
Strongly Agree	17%	0%	17%
Agree	48%	50%	17%
Neutral	19%	25%	0%
Disagree	12%	20%	50%
Strongly Disagree	4%	5%	17%

Sixty-five per cent Overall and 50 per cent of Leaders agree (Strongly Agree and Agree) that members of Conference demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion in our National Leadership groups, whereas 34 per cent of BIPOC+ agree. In contrast, 14 per cent Overall, 25 per cent, and most notably, 67 per cent of BIPOC+ respondents disagree (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) that members of Conference demonstrate this commitment.

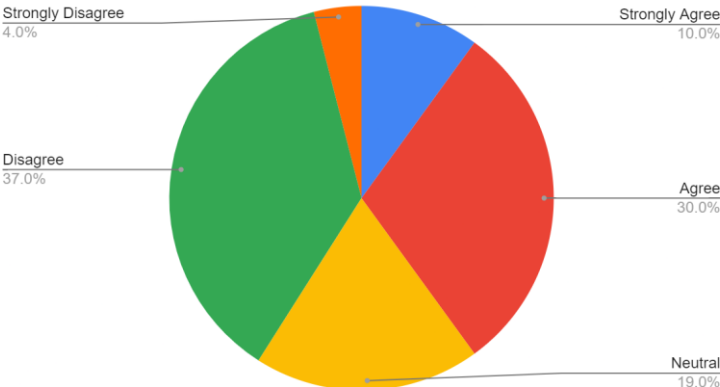


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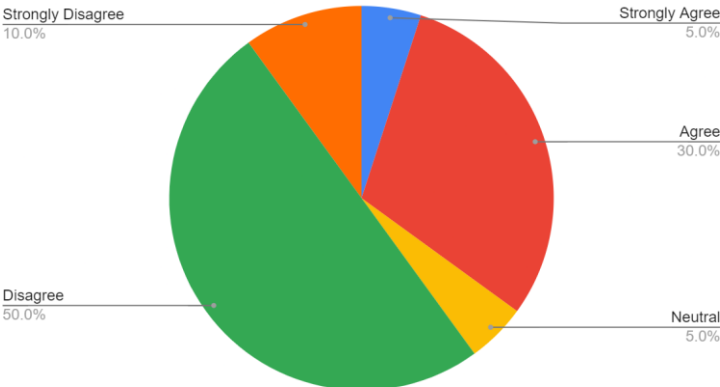
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6. Members of conference visibly correspond to the racial and ethnic diversity of the Canadian population (selected one):

Overall



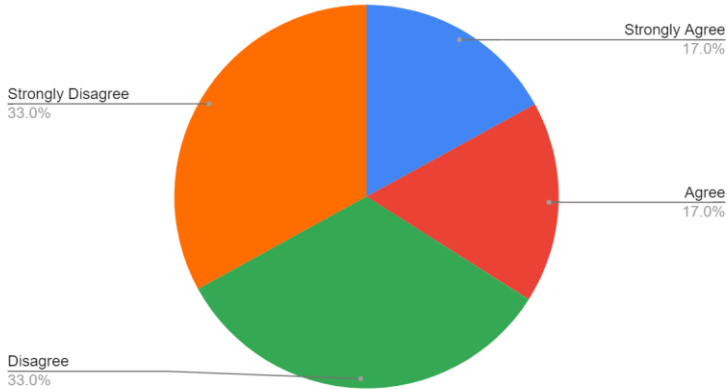
Leaders



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BIPOC+



	Overall	Leaders	BIPOC +
Strongly Agree	10%	5%	17%
Agree	30%	30%	17%
Neutral	18%	5%	0%
Disagree	37%	50%	33%
Strongly Disagree	4%	10%	33%

Across the board there is agreement that members of Conference *do not* visibly correspond to the diversity of the Canadian population (Disagree and Strongly Disagree): 41 per cent Overall, 60 per cent Leaders, and 66 per cent of BIPOC+.

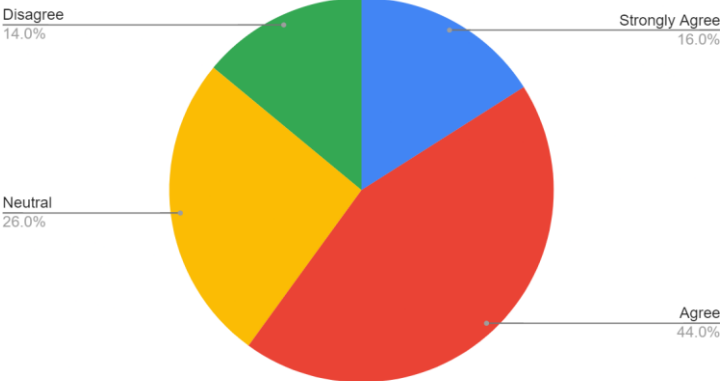


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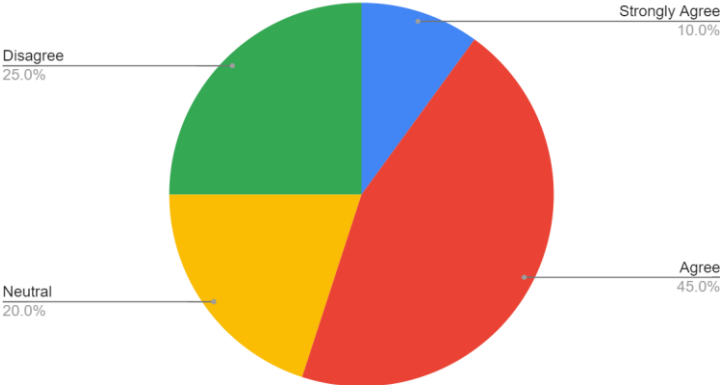
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7. Members of conference correspond to the diversity found *within* our Free Methodist churches (selected one):

Overall



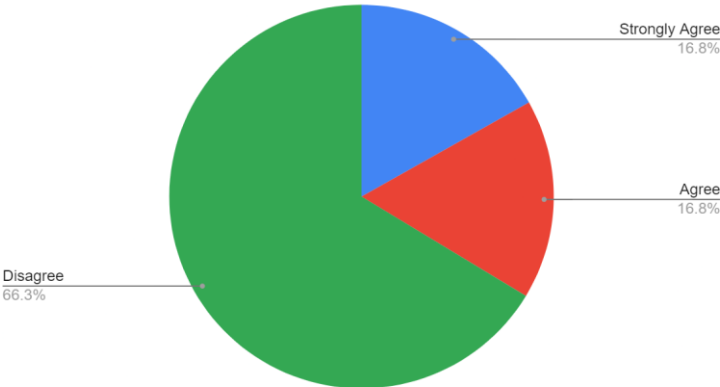
Leaders



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BIPOC+



	Overall	Leaders	BIPOC +
Strongly Agree	16%	10%	17%
Agree	44%	45%	17%
Neutral	26%	20%	0%
Disagree	14%	25%	67%
Strongly Disagree	0%	0%	0%

In contrast to the agreement among the groups in the previous question, the difference between Overall and Leaders versus BIPOC+ is stark. The Overall category (Strongly Agree and Agree) at 60 per cent and Leaders at 55 per cent (Strongly Agree and Agree) believe that members of Conference correspond to the diversity of our local churches. In contrast, 67 per cent of BIPOC+ disagree with this position.

Notably, there was *no neutral position* among BIPOC+ respondents, and furthermore, almost twice as many (34 per cent vs. 67 per cent) believe that there is not corresponding diversity in Conference versus the local congregation.

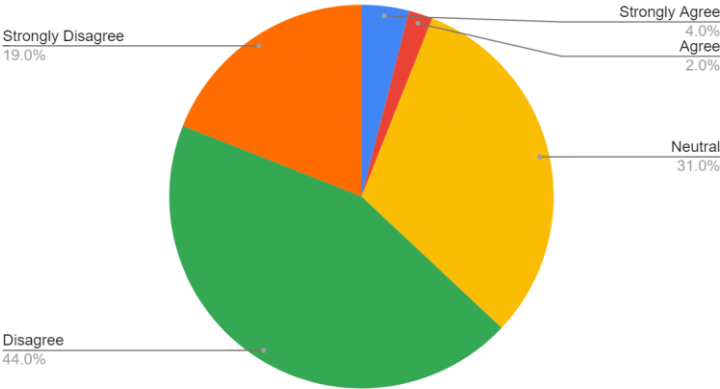


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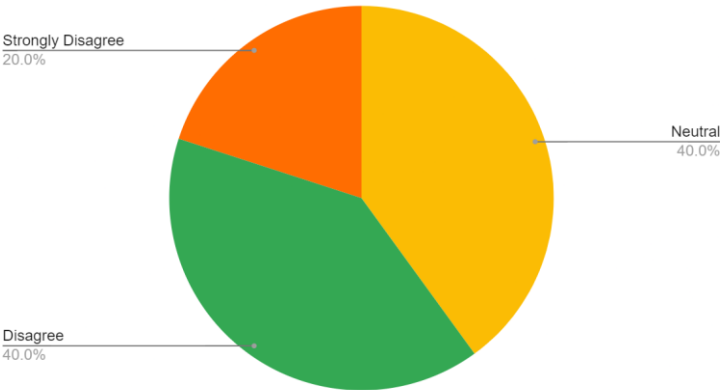
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8. Being BIPOC is a barrier to serving on a national leadership role (e.g. BoA, MEGaP, SCOD, etc.) within the FMCiC (selected one):

Overall



Leaders



	Overall	Leaders	BIPOC +
Strongly Agree	4%	0%	0%
Agree	2%	0%	17%
Neutral	31%	40%	50%
Disagree	44%	40%	0%

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It is difficult to draw clear results from the results of this question. Taken together with a perspective that a Neutral response includes the possibility of a barrier, then Overall 37% of respondents think race/ethnicity is or could be a barrier; 40% of Leaders then share that perspective, but 67% of BIPOC+ respondents think is it or could be a barrier. More In contrast, 63 per cent Overall (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) and 60 per cent Leaders (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) believe that being BIPOC is *not a barrier* to serving in a national leadership role, but less than half (33%) of BIPOC+ themselves share that perspective.

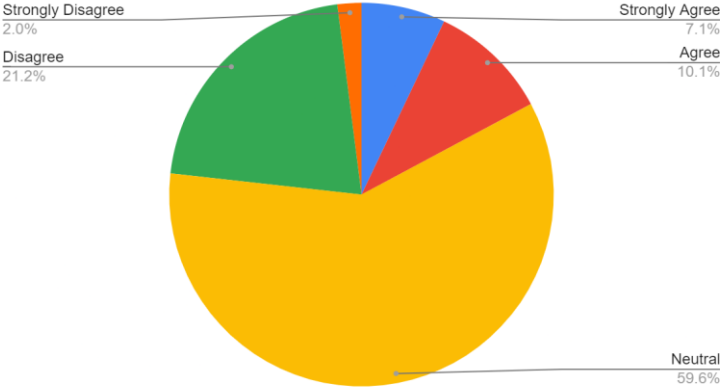


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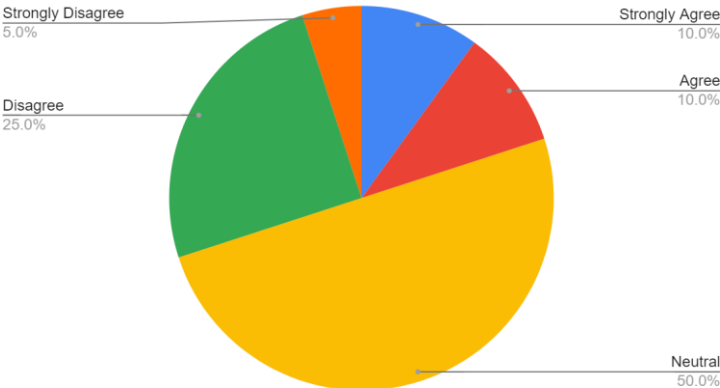
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9. Do you have or know of a compelling narrative/story around the FMCiC's diversity & inclusion story (select one):

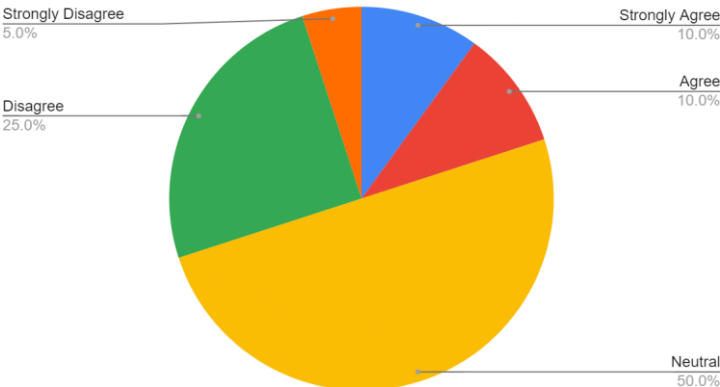
Overall



Leaders



Leaders



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	Overall	Leaders	BIPOC +
Strongly Agree	7%	10%	17%
Agree	10%	10%	33%
Neutral	59%	50%	50%
Disagree	21%	25%	0%
Strongly Disagree	3%	5%	0%

At least half of *all* respondents did not have or know of a compelling narrative about FMCiC’s diversity and inclusion story (50 to 59 per cent responded with Neutral). Less than half of Overall (17 per cent; Strongly Agree and Agree) and Leaders (20 per cent; Strongly Agree and Agree) have or know of a compelling narrative, whereas 50 per cent of BIPOC+ did have or know a compelling narrative around diversity and inclusion.

Notably, 0 per cent BIPOC+ respondent noted that they did not know or have a compelling FMCiC diversity and inclusion narrative, while 23 per cent Overall (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) and 30 per cent Leaders (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) shared that perspective.

As part of this question, respondents were invited to share their stories. They are below, in their own words.

[I] serve in a church that has a congregation that is approx. 50% BIPOC. Growing edge of the church are people from Africa, India, and [the] Philippines. Local church board, committees, and ministries reflect multi-ethnic family of believers.

A member [of] one of my pastorates who was a typical European-heritage Canadian mother heard her blond-haired daughter playing with a dark-skinned friend. They were having such fun that the mother asked, “What are you two girls laughing about?” They replied, “We just found two identical dresses and were laughing [about] thinking about each wearing one, going out on the street for a walk and finding out that people wouldn’t be able to tell us apart.” Their full unconscious acceptance of each other, with their distinct differences, sets a goal for all of us in our present culture.

Previous iterations of the national BoA have had a higher degree of racial and ethnic diversity than currently in place. Demonstrates to me some level of commitment to representing our denominational diversity on the highest national governance body. The low degree of current diversity has arisen from resignations and reduced BoA size.



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I enjoyed seeing various pastors making an effort to speak in French to our Québec pastors. I was surprised at some of them because I didn't know they spoke any French at all. Even though their French seemed laboured, I got the feeling the Québec pastors appreciated the effort.

It was communicated to me that as a POC [Person of Colour] I was promoting “identity politics” by asking questions about racial inclusion.

I was told that asking committees to diversify had the potential to weaken committees and push the denomination away from strong candidates.

I was [the] pastor of a multicultural Free Methodist church for eleven years which reflected twelve different racial and cultural backgrounds. The story is one of acceptance of myself and family as a mixed-race family by the diverse congregation. The relationship of care and grace has extended well past the time of transition to new leadership. When “attacks” happened [from] outside the church from time to time, people handled it with grace and unity.

Over the years, the Surrey church has transitioned to Fijian membership and leadership, and includes both Caucasian and Chinese [attendees], although in the minority. I wonder how inclusive the Fijians have become?

Through IET, I have become acquainted and [am] now friends with Jonathan Maracle, who has shared twice in recent years at our church on Indigenous reconciliation. That was part of what inspired us to partner with Tearfund on a “Bring Back the Buffalo” reconciliation project. Our board chair who happens to be of Asian [descent] was able to represent our church in meeting leaders from the Cote Nation in Saskatchewan in a listening and relationship building visit.

[I was] engaged and serve[d] [on the] BoA and Intercultural Network.

The [role] of SAH FMCiC involved as a big [role] [in] helping [a] church like ours to [sponsor] refugees around the world.

Staff at Headquarters. [Note: presumably the staff at Headquarters demonstrate a compelling story about Diversity and Inclusion]

When the Intercultural Network was formed in Toronto by Howard Olver in 2001, it was the first denominational expression of support outside of Dan Sheffield's role. Many of the BIPOC pastors and/or pastors leading multicultural congregations in the GTA felt that this was a key component to intentional support from the movement. The ICN was an inclusive space created for people to share, among other things, stories of struggle, discrimination and rejection. It was also a joyful space where ethnicity, culture and languages were valued and celebrated. It is unfortunate that so many of the pastors in that original network have left the FMCiC or (a few) remain in the denomination but have chosen to limit their participation out of disillusionment. The ICN itself is now struggling and our network leader is not even included in the list of Network Leaders on the denomination's webpage. I think that this is representative of how we've gone backwards as a movement in many ways in our diversity and inclusion efforts at the leadership levels.

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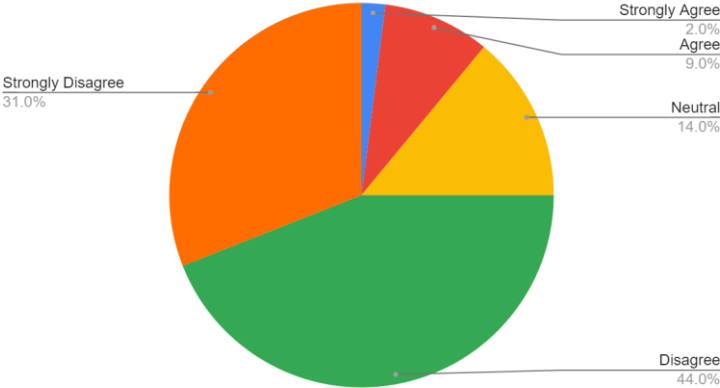
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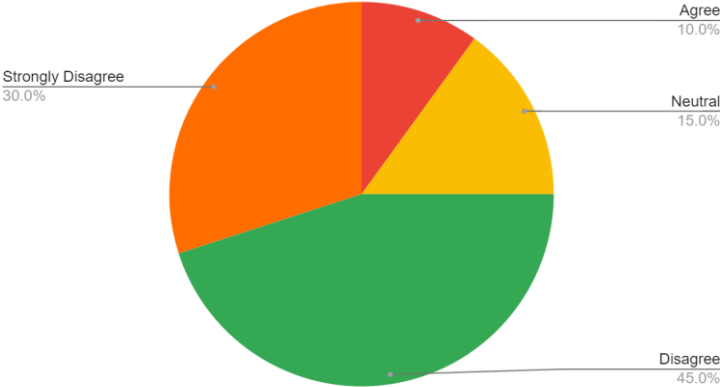
I am Black and serve [on] my local church board. Again, 70% of the congregation in my church are people of colour, mostly black. So, there is diversity and inclusion in church. We are able to celebrate worship in our Black way of worship which everyone in church appreciates.

10. Have you experienced or witnessed a situation of racism in interpersonal interactions at the organizational/national level within the FMCiC (select one)?

Overall



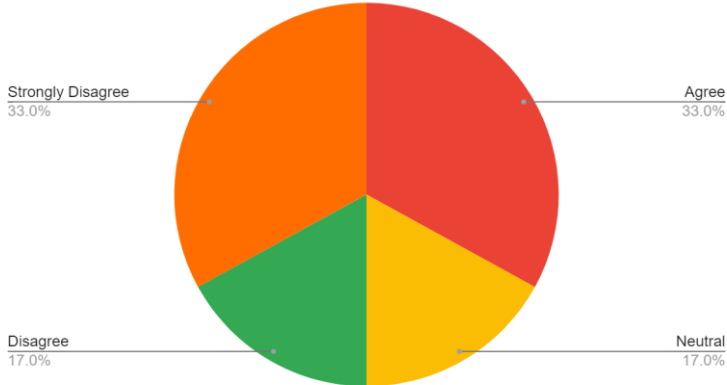
Leaders



Racial Justice and Ethnic Equity Task Force

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BIPOC+



	Overall	Leaders	BIPOC +
Strongly Agree	2%	0%	0%
Agree	9%	10%	33%
Neutral	14%	15%	17%
Disagree	44%	45%	17%
Strongly Disagree	31%	30%	33%

Seventy-five per cent Overall and Leaders (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) assert that they have not experienced and/or witnessed interpersonal racism in the denomination; 50 per cent of BIPOC+ share their perspective. In contrast, 33 percent of BIPOC+ have experienced and/or witnessed racism within the FMCiC, compared to 11 per cent Overall and 10 per cent of Leaders (Strongly Agree and Agree). Respondents were invited to share their experiences; notably, *no stories were shared*.



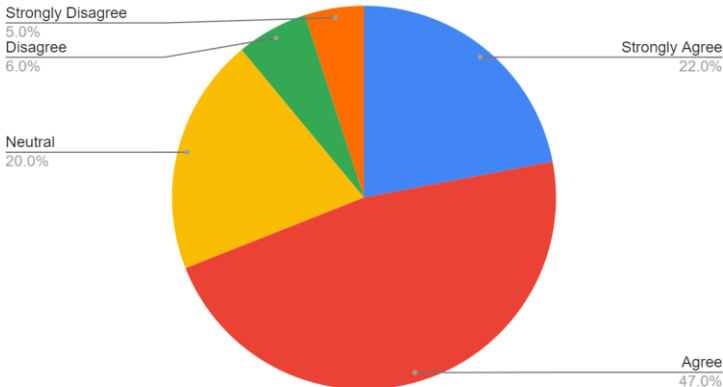
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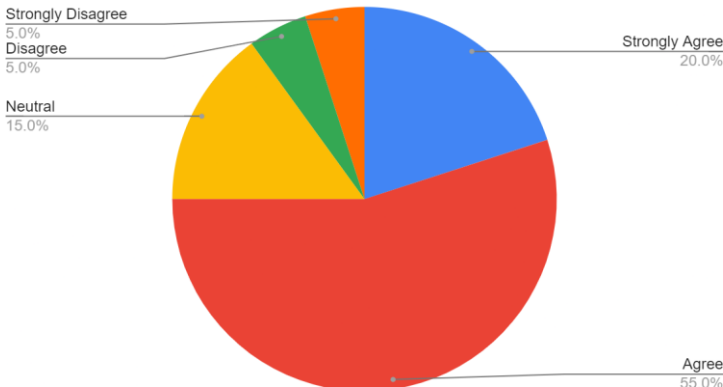
Thinking about your own personal perspective and life experiences (select one):

11. The climate of racism in Canada includes organizational cultures, policies, practices or procedures that exclude, displace or marginalize some racialized groups or individuals:

Overall

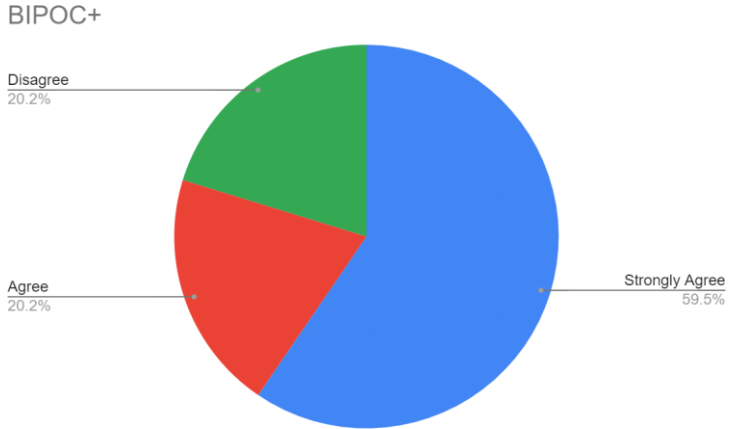


Leaders



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	Overall	Leaders	BIPOC +
Strongly Agree	22%	20%	66%
Agree	47%	55%	17%
Neutral	20%	15%	0%
Disagree	6%	5%	17%
Strongly Disagree	5%	5%	0%

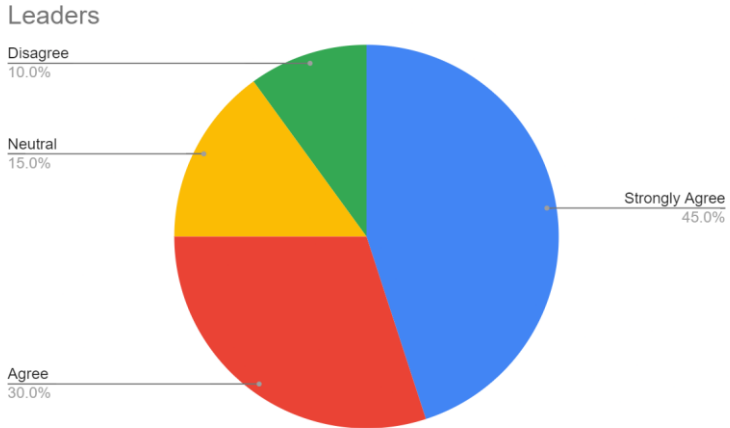
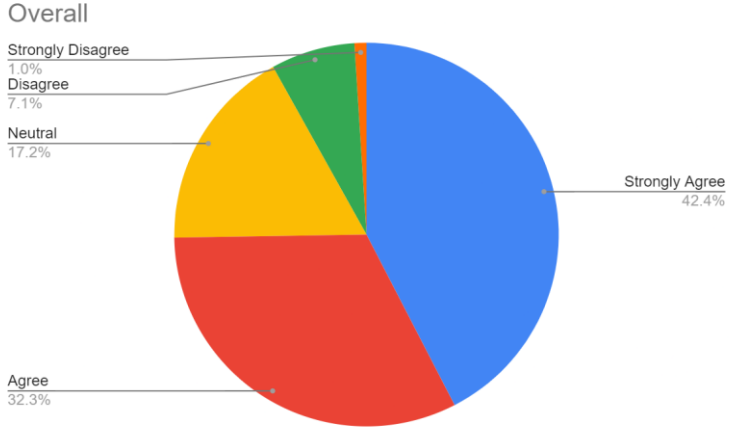
67 to 70 per cent of respondents in each group agree that the climate of racism in Canada includes organizational cultures, policies, practices, or procedures that exclude, displace, or marginalize some racialized groups or individuals. In contrast 10 to 17 per cent of respondents disagree.



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12. Some or all of the following are best practices that the FMCiC should adopt in order to advance our national/organizational racial justice efforts: awareness and education campaigns, intercultural competency training, a foundational intercultural competency course.



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BIPOC+



	Overall	Leaders	BIPOC +
Strongly Agree	42%	45%	100%
Agree	32%	30%	0%
Neutral	17%	15%	0%
Disagree	7%	10%	0%
Strongly Disagree	1%	0%	0%

In answer to whether FMCiC should adopt specific practices (such as awareness and education campaigns, intercultural competency training, a foundational intercultural competency course) in order to advance our national/organizational racial justice efforts, 74 per cent Overall (Strongly Agree and Agree), 75 per cent Leaders (Strongly Agree) agree. One hundred per cent BIPOC+ respondents Strongly Agree, unanimously agreeing that FMCiC needs further training equipping to achieve its denominational goals in regard to racial justice.

Findings and Themes

Several themes emerge out of this data. First, Overall and Leadership respondents were more likely to indicate positively regarding the denomination’s stance and practices in pursuit of racial justice. In contrast, BIPOC+ respondents responded negatively in larger percentages than Overall or Leaders, to varying degrees in every category.

Second, Overall and Leadership corresponded in response with one another more often than with BIPOC+, with the exception of when all three categories were in majority agreement. This is concerning for several possible reasons. While this may be speculative because of the low number of

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BIPOC respondents, could it be that BIPOC+ have unique experiences that both Overall and Leadership may not be aware of? We wonder if a second reason may be that Leaders are more likely to experience and hear the experiences of Overall, rather than BIPOC+.

Third, it is worth pointing out that more BIPOC+ respondents identified having known or experienced racist encounters within the denomination, in contrast to Overall and Leaders. And although respondents were invited to share their experiences, no one did so. One possible reason for this may be that respondents were fearful of sharing, or perhaps the experiences were too vulnerable to be shared publicly.

Fourth, there is agreement across the board that members of Conference do not visibly correspond to the diversity of the Canadian population, but there is *disagreement* whether Conference represents the diversity of congregations within FMCiC (Q6, Q7). The question asked here is, if Conference *does* represent the diversity of congregations within FMCiC but not Canada, why are our congregations (or perceptions of our congregations) not more diverse? Noting that 67 per cent of BIPOC+ disagree that Conference represents the diversity within FMCiC churches, there is a distinct possibility that Conference neither represents the diversity of FMCiC churches nor the diversity within Canada.

Finally, across the board there is agreement that FMCiC should adopt specific practices (such as awareness and education campaigns, intercultural competency training, a foundational intercultural competency course) in order to advance our national/organizational racial justice efforts (Q12). Alongside this observation is that no majority of respondents are in agreement that the FMCiC has policies and procedures in place to actively support diversity and inclusion (Q4); this likely merits more investigation alongside implementation of new practices. Furthermore, a third of our BIPOC+ respondents have identified that being a Black or Indigenous person, or a person of colour as being a barrier to serving on national leadership (Q8). Further research should be done in order to investigate why national leadership is perceived to be this way, and whether there is any truth to the matter.

Limitations

There are a few limitations to this survey. First, there were only 81 respondents. More responses may have had an impact on the data gathered. Second, the majority of respondents identified as having a European background or heritage, and a small minority of respondents in contrast identified as BIPOC. Is this reflective of Conference demographics? Regardless, a larger percentage of BIPOC respondents may have provided greater nuancing to BIPOC experience within FMCiC. Finally, there were no French-language respondents. As such, this survey in no way represents the experience of the French-speaking part of the Conference.

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Appendix VII: Document written to Nominating Committee

In 2021 this document was written in response to a request for the RJEETF to help the Nominating Committee achieve the goal of increased diversity on national teams. We have included this as a reference for future initiatives by the Nominating Committee.

May 4, 2021

Dear Board of Administration members,

Background:

The goal of recruiting individuals from diverse backgrounds is not to fill a quota; rather, it is to enhance our denomination's ability to reflect the rich diversity of God's design for our congregations, to represent the beautiful diversity of our communities and to respond equitably to the needs of our diverse country.

The national Nominating Committee itself has specific requirements from The Manual to "have, to the extent possible, equal lay and ministerial representation and balanced representation from the various geographical areas of the general conference" (§2.3.1).

The national Nominating Committee is already responsible for providing nominations for:

- study teams for and the secretary general of the general conference
- members of the board of administration and committees listed in ¶420 (except the nominating committee itself)
- any board of administration or committee position which becomes vacant during the interim between sessions of the General Conference

Were there some lapses in existing process, complicated in part by the COVID-19 environment:

1. Did the network leaders meet apart from the national leadership team and develop a slate of nominees to the nominating committee from the various regions of the church to present to the general conference? (§2.3.1).
2. If the nominating committee was not able to identify an ordained minister from a geographic region to serve on the board of administration or on a general conference committee, did it consider nominating a representative ministerial candidate before setting aside the principle of regional representation (§2.3.3) or other principles of diversity?

Considerations for a Diversity Framework:

The purpose of the Nominating Committee is to guide the denomination in its recruitment process, while keeping at the forefront the goals stated in The Manual with respect to recruitment method and representation.

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It became clear at the General Conference Vote #3 that we have gone backwards in terms the principle of representation, which includes diversity. The slate of nominees for the Nominating Committee, and Board of Administration were primarily male, white, English-speaking nominees. Of course, we recognize that there were complicating factors to recruitment in the preceding year. And to its credit, Nominating left 2 vacant positions on the BoA with a view/hope to including more diverse, representative candidates.

Nevertheless, it must be stated from the RJEETF's perspective:

- It is difficult to have an effective recruitment strategy without first assessing the present composition of the board and other national committees. Establishing the profile of the existing board and standing committees helps identify the missing skills and experiences needed as well as the appropriate representation of gender, ethnicity, language, etc. required.
- Diversity among the nomination committee members is also a key element for increasing the diversity of the board and other national committees.

As such we present the attached list of recommendations for the BoA to consider.

RJEETF Recommendations Regarding Nominating Committee

Create an Intentional Diversity Structure for National Teams

As the current Board of Administration makeup is unbalanced and leans heavily on white, male representation and as the current clergy component lacks representation of women, Quebec and BIPOC leadership, the RJEETF strongly suggests that the following changes are implemented ahead of the June 2021 General Conference. The urgency of this initial recommendation is twofold:

- As we approach General Conference 2021 in June, a three-year waiting period for diverse clergy and lay representation in anticipation of GC 2024 is too long.
- We firmly believe that racial reconciliation requires the creation of space for marginalized voices to participate in the decision-making process. The pursuit of equitable organizations requires an intentional shift of power towards the voices of those who are often silenced or unrecognized. We sense this is an opportunity for the FMCiC to embrace a small step towards greater diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Therefore, we recommend the following:

Recommendation 1:

With the aim of balancing the current BOA team, we recommend that two clergy members be asked to step down to make space for diverse voices. While our team is focused on racial justice, we have also noted the lack of female clergy voices and Quebec voices (the majority being racialized voices), along with individuals

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who identify as BIPOC, as such we request the two clergy spaces be immediately filled with two diverse (women, Quebec, or BIPOC) clergy voices.

Recommendation 2:

Designate specific board spaces to represent the diversity of the FMCiC within the decision-making body. A suggested make up is that the board designates 2 spaces for women, 2 spaces for BIPOC and 2 spaces from Quebec, recognizing there may be some overlap in the spaces, with a desire to have one clergy and one lay for each category. Please note these are minimums only.

Recommendation 3:

We recommend that each national team create a similar recruitment structure that seeks to implement specific and intentional diversity spaces. We suggest the nominating committee lead the way in this endeavour and use their new recruitment structure to bolster the diversity of both their clergy and lay positions between General Conferences.

Create a National Nominating Strategy

The implementation of a national nominating strategy that builds on the above recommendations will help build a consistent pathway towards greater diversity equity and inclusion for all national teams. This recommendation focuses on intentionality, consistency, and collaboration.

Therefore, we recommend the following:

Recommendation 4:

Each national team create a skills and diversity matrix (sample attached) that outlines the skills, gifts and diversity needed for their committee.

- The matrix would be utilized to evaluate current team membership and highlight what skills, personnel and diversity will be needed as they approach the election cycle. This information would be made accessible for Nominating Committee as they seek candidates for various teams.
- Utilizing the skills diversity matrix, diversity team minimum goals and other available tools (i.e. the manual, reflection with national leaders etc.), Nominating Committee vets and chooses a slate of candidates.

Recommendation 5:

We recommend that a similar process be implemented for Nominating Committee member selection, as well.

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Create a Communication Strategy

An emerging theme as individuals are approached for national committee representation is that they sense a high level of commitment to participate in local church leadership but feel disconnected from the national FMCiC vision and leadership. To address this emerging disconnect we recommend that national and regional leaders pursue the following to help create a national FMCiC passion for the present and future of the denomination and its activities.

Therefore, we recommend the following:

Recommendation 6:

Communicate the types of individuals the Nominating Committee is recruiting to pastors and congregations by engaging network leaders, network mentors and regional coaches. These leaders have direct access to pastors, congregations and their leadership teams which provides a communication pathway between the nominating committee and local churches.

Recommendation 7:

Create a national communication strategy that addresses the value and purpose of national teams, the need for greater diversity and invites local church pastors, leaders, and members to be involved in national decision making. This could include a range of leadership voices, but should be initiated and led by the NLT, proactively visiting and engaging churches between General Conference.

Ethnic and Quebec Churches

Special attention is required to more fully engage both ethnic and Quebecois churches as they demonstrate low participation and representation on national committees. At the heart of this recommendation is communication and relationship building that leads to intentional recruitment of clergy and lay members from these churches. In the midst of our conversations a cultural element rises to the surface. For many ethnic or multiethnic congregations their interactions with the Bishop play a significant role in communicating and establishing their value and connectedness to the organization. Having direct contact with all levels of leadership is important but does not negate the need for direct contact with the Bishop. As such, many ethnic churches, require specific, targeted and frequent engagement from all members of the NLT, but most specifically from the office of the Bishop.

Therefore, we recommend the following:

Recommendation 8:

In conjunction with Recommendation 7 we recommend intentional and direct invitations to ethnic and Quebecois churches, from all levels of leadership (i.e. coaches, network leaders, NLT), to submit names for the nominating committee to consider for national positions.

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Recommendation 9:

Discuss with MEGAP if there are specific hinderances to leaders of ethnic and/ or Quebec churches being qualified for national leadership participation.

Recommendation 10:

Provide consistent language translation of all written and spoken word to encourage and support participation on national teams. The assurance that this service will be provided should be communicated as a part of the recruitment strategy for ethnic and Quebecois churches.

Recommendation 11:

Have NLT and specifically the Bishop engage ethnic churches, Quebec churches and other marginalized persons (i.e. BIPOC pastors and leaders) during national events, thereby communicating the overall value of these groups to the larger denomination. These conversations should include targeted moments to communicate that these individuals are wanted and needed on national committees and as a part of the decision-making body. To maximize the effectiveness of these connect points we suggest personal invitations (rather than solely relying on listserv or Cliff's Notes), dedicated and sufficient time for conversations (rather than information downloading), and a focus on relationship building. These formal connects, can and should, translate into greater informal relationship building between these minority groups and both the national leadership and broader vision of the denomination.

Creating Change

While none of these strategies or recommendations are singularly sufficient, we believe that collectively they can provide an initial pathway towards more diverse leadership, increased connection between local churches and the denomination and increased knowledge regarding the purpose and value of national teams. We anticipate that the intentionality of these recommendations will produce visible results that help foster an environment for ripples of change. As a task force, we are anticipating that the BOA, IET and NLT will recognize that the current white, male majority leadership across the denomination is not sustainable as a means of demonstrating that minority voices are valued and needed.

We also recognize that not all members of leadership teams or local churches will see the immediate value in diversification and greater inclusion. We believe, however, that if the FMCiC wishes to contribute meaningfully to discussions on racial justice, reconciliation, and equity the voices of marginalized individuals from a variety of ethnic backgrounds and experiences must be included, following the mantra “nothing about us; without us!”. As diversity grows, as ethnic representation expands, we expect that if allowed to flourish, it will breed more diversity, more racial justice, and more ethnic equity. It is with this in mind that we present our final recommendation.

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Recommendation 12:

In anticipation that our words will not only be read and discussed, but also acted upon, we request and recommend that a formal response from the BOA regarding Recommendation 1 and 2 be offered back to our team by May 15, 2021, and that we receive a formal response from the BOA on the remainder of recommendations by September 2021.

Respectfully Submitted,

Rev. Keitha Ogbogu

RJEETF Chair (on behalf of the taskforce)

[Attached] Sample Skills and Diversity Matrix

Key Strengths for Board Members	<i>Not like me.</i>		<i>Somewhat like me.</i>		<i>Much like me.</i>
<i>I consider myself a leader.</i>					
<i>I am a collaborative decision-maker.</i>					
<i>I have supervisory/management experience.</i>					
<i>I am a good listener and communicator.</i>					
<i>I have strong financial literacy.</i>					
<i>I am open to learning.</i>					
<i>I am a strategic thinker.</i>					
<i>I have knowledge and/or experience in:</i> <i>(Please check all that apply)</i>	<i>Personal Experience</i>	<i>Volunteer Experience</i>	<i>Formal Education</i>	<i>Professional Experience</i>	
<i>Accounting</i>					
<i>Business Development and/or Finance</i>					
<i>Communications/Public Relations</i>					
<i>Community Based Organizations</i>					
<i>Education</i>					
<i>Fundraising</i>					
<i>Governance/Experience as a Board Director</i>					
<i>Healthcare</i>					
<i>Human Resources</i>					
<i>Law/Justice</i>					
<i>Politics</i>					
<i>Social Work/Psychology</i>					
<i>Self-employment/Entrepreneurship</i>					
<i>Theology</i>					
<i>Other: _____</i>					

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Other: _____					
Other: _____					
Diversity Profile:	<i>Please describe yourself in your own words.</i>				
Age Range:	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s 70+
Sex:					
Spirituality/Religion:					
Cultural Identity/Experience:					

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Appendix VIII: Acknowledgements

Thank you.

These words feel so insufficient when the hours of work, number of ZOOM meetings, mountains of emails and WhatsApp conversations are counted. To the team that made this document possible, each of you brought your whole selves into this work. You shared your stories of racial trauma, the ways you have experienced loss due to attitudes and systems of white supremacy, and the sorrow you faced when people belittled your experiences. From 2020 till 2024 we have walked with each other through the deaths of family members, illnesses, changes in career, academic progress and the many ups and downs of life. We have had late night phone calls, early morning meetings, and epic email chains. To have prayed together, cried together, and supported one another through it all has been a privilege. You have worked hard, listened well, written beautifully, and edited repeatedly. We are grateful.

Thank you to Kalesha Peters, Raquel John-Matuzewiski, and Roland Jeudy for your thoughtful contributions along the way. We were grateful to serve alongside you, even if only for a short while. Your bright and beautiful insights are found throughout this document.

Thank you to Andrea Chang, the late Dr. Tim Tang, and the Tyndale Intercultural Ministry Center for your assistance in helping us to focus our work and ideas early in the project. You offered us insight and direction. We are so grateful for your contribution and your willingness to guide our small team.

Thank you to Rev. Dan Sheffield for your years of experience and work in this area within the FMCiC. Your name was repeated time and time again as an important voice in helping individuals better understand interculturalism and the changing demographics of Canada. As our critical friend you made yourself available to listen, to guide and to answer our many questions.

Thank you to Dr. Heather Bensler, the Assistant Dean – Academic Partnerships and Associate Professor of Teaching, Faculty of Nursing, at the University of Calgary. Your academic journey regarding the study of systemic racial and ethnic oppression were inspiring. As a critical friend we deeply appreciate your comments, questions, and ideas regarding our final document. Your time and expertise are deeply appreciated. Thank you for your willingness to be an active leader in racial reconciliation.

Thank you to the FMCUSA for your willingness to share your stories, ideas and perspectives on racial and ethnic equity and justice. We are grateful for your voices, your vulnerability, and your forward thinking. While we are certain to miss some names, we do want to highlight the contributions from Dr. Traylor, Joshua Canada, Rev. Katherine Howell and Rev. Dr. Fraser Venter.

Thank you to the FMCiC BoA and the NLT for entrusting us with this opportunity to research racial justice and ethnic equity. Your willingness to listen, ask questions and provide a platform for conversation are welcome signs for the future of the denomination. We look forward to witnessing the ways this work continues among us as the Free Methodist Church in Canada.

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Finally, thanks to everyone who allowed us to interview you. Your experiences and stories were held with care. Thank you for trusting us with your vulnerability and your insights. This work would not be possible without you.

History Team

Raquel John-Matuzewiski (served 2020-2023)

Kalesha Peters (served 2020-2021)

Mr. David Wright

Debbie Yeboah

Congregational Team

Xenia Chan

Rev. Sabrina Hinds

Leadership Team

Rev. Darrin Lindsay

Rev. Keitha Ogbogu

Quebec

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Roland Judy (served 2020-2021)

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